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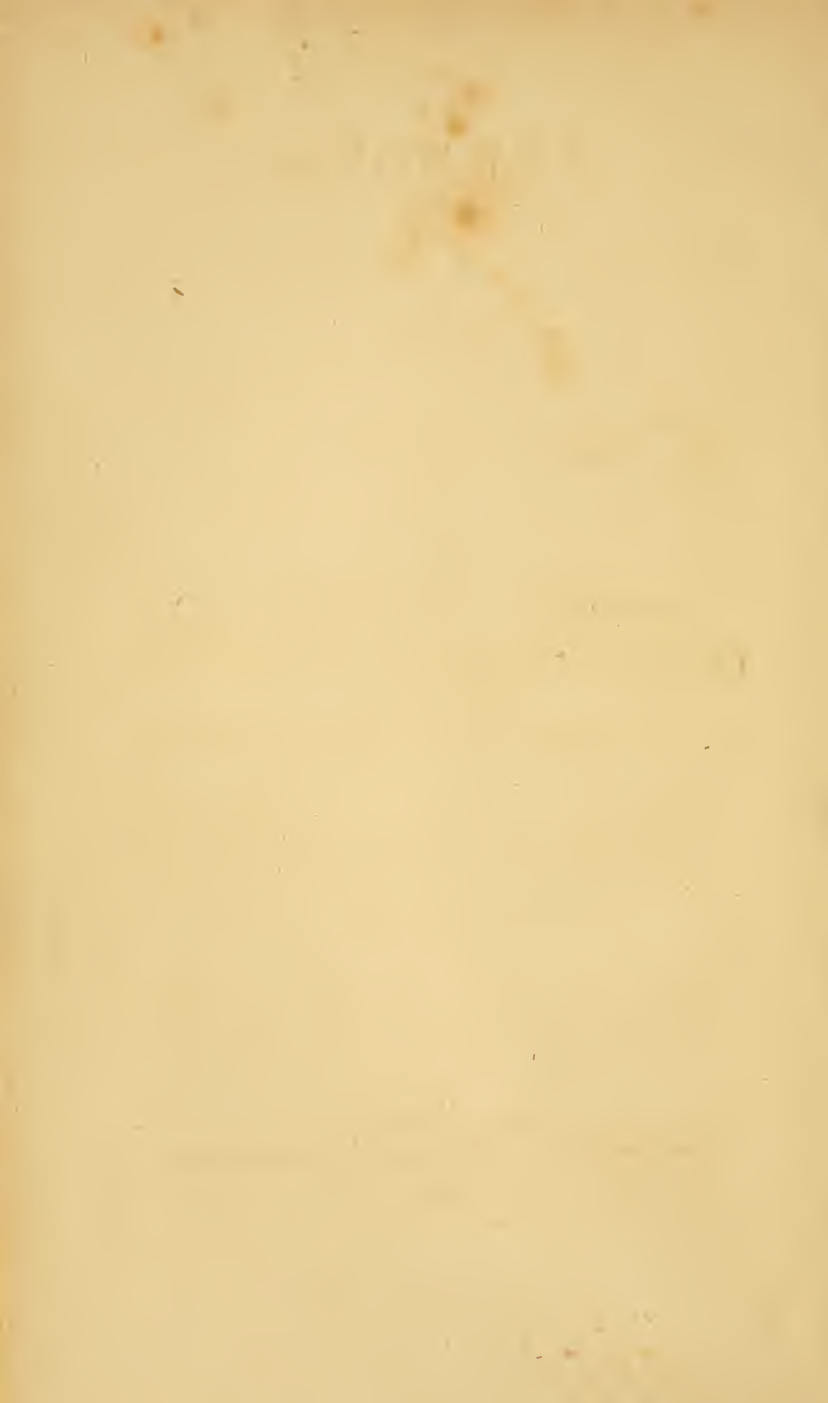
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Abby A. Chew

from her affectionate cousin  
the Author.







*L. H. Swift*

# SERMONS.



BY

✓  
ROBERT A. HALLAM, D. D.

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TO  
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THESE SERMONS,

MEMORIALS OF TWENTY-ONE YEARS PLEASANTLY SPENT IN ITS SERVICE BY ONE

BORN AND NURTURED IN ITS BOSOM,

ARE

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.



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### LOT.

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LOT is one of those persons of whom it is not easy to form an accurate and satisfactory judgment. If we were not guided to a decision by the express testimony of Scripture, we might find it difficult to determine whether he ought to rank among weak and inconsistent believers or serious and well-opinioned worldlings. We hardly know whether we are looking at religion sadly alloyed by the world, or at the world manifestly tinctured with religion. On one side we see much apparent faith and goodness; but on the other are evidently great worldliness and sin. The object is ambiguous, and we stand in doubt of it. It is evidently the unhappy result of a vicious endeavour

to combine the service of God and of mammon ; but we cannot be quite certain whether the attempt be to superinduce the latter upon the former, or the former upon the latter. There is not a little of this equivocal manifestation in the world in all ages. Religion debased by worldliness, and worldliness disguised by religion, resemble each other too nearly to be readily distinguished. It is not indeed our duty or our office to make this discrimination with certainty and exactness, and the effort is oftener prejudicial than salutary. How to know tares from wheat precisely in this life is not the prerogative of man, and the attempt to assume and exercise it is more frequently harmful than profitable. We are cautioned against any unwise anxiety to effect a nice and certain separation of them now, "lest while we gather out the tares we root up the wheat with them." Both are to grow together till the harvest; and in the time of the harvest the great Husbandman will make the separation with unerring accuracy and thorough success. It is better, rather, so far as we may be able, to abstain from even having opinions about the spiritual state of men any farther than they force themselves upon us involuntarily ; and then to entertain them under a modest sense of our extreme liability to mistake, and with a recollection of the great variety of causes that may operate to mislead our judgment and obscure the truth concerning them. In the case of Lot, however, as has been already intimated, Scripture comes to our relief, to dispel the obscurity and relieve the suspense. It calls him "just Lot;" and informs us that while "dwelling among" the filthy



scenes which surrounded him in Sodom, he "vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unrighteous deeds," that he was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked," and maintained a heart right towards God in the midst of the revolting abominations which obtruded themselves continually upon his notice. And this decision of the Spirit of God may teach us that our judgment of men should always lean to the side of charity. For if we had been left to the naked outward facts of his life as they are detailed in the sacred history, and were destitute of this inspired disclosure of his inward principles and dispositions, we might have felt ourselves strongly impelled towards a different conclusion. And this may serve as a hint, that in other cases which force us to look upon them with painful misgiving, or even sad despondency, there may be redeeming attributes which raise them to a better place in the Divine estimation, "some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel," which may secure at the last their acceptance and approval.

Lot was the nephew of "faithful Abraham," and a partaker of "like precious faith" with him. When Abraham, in obedience to a divine command, left the country of his forefathers, Lot accompanied him. It is probable that Haran, the father of Lot, died in his youth, and that Lot was indebted to Abraham for those kind offices which made up to him, as far as that might be, the lack of parental care and nurture. Of Abraham it is recorded as among his highest claims to the approbation and confidence of God, that he was known to him as one who would "command his children and

his household after him to keep the way of the Lord;" and doubtless his practice was conformable in fact. Within the precincts of such a family Lot learned the sentiments of piety and the maxims of virtue, and learned them not in vain. His illustrious kinsman's instructions and example were not lost upon him. He was a believer, and faith yielded in him, as it always must when genuine, "the fruit of good living." But alas! we cannot say that his faith and goodness were eminent. The contrary was sadly evident in his history. A worldly spirit alloyed his piety, and sometimes cast so deep a shadow upon it as to veil it in doubt and obscurity.

Abraham and Lot exemplified in their experience that rule of Providence by which oftentimes even in worldly wealth, "godliness has the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come," and self-denial for God and truth is recompensed with "manifold more in the present time, as well as in the world to come life everlasting." Aliens and wanderers in Canaan, they were nevertheless eminently prosperous men. Though God gave his faithful servant no possession in that land, "no, not so much as to set his foot on," nothing but "a possession of a burying-place," yet in other wealth he and his companion rapidly increased in opulence and consideration. The sons of Heth addressed him as "a mighty prince." "Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold." "And Lot also, which went with Abraham, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together." This condition of outward prosperity proved a severe trial

of their principles and of their attachment. Riches is an ordeal which none but a sturdy and well-conditioned piety can endure. Abraham bore the test. Lot failed before it. They were surrounded by idolaters—"the Canaanite and the Perizzite then dwelt in the land." The only two men in all the length and breadth of the country who knew and feared God, were estranged from one another by the enlargement of their worldly goods. They needed greatly each other's countenance and sympathy to sustain their steadfastness and consistency in circumstances so adverse to both. But the paltry pelf of this world parted them, and drove them asunder to pursue each his solitary journey unsupported by counsel or sympathy. Strifes grew up between their respective herdmen, either side contending for the wells and pasture grounds, which were not sufficient to accommodate their numerous herds together. Harmony was lost, and jealousies and recriminations came in its place. The household of the patriarch was divided against itself. And an unseemly spectacle of contention and hatred was presented before the eyes of the idolaters, little commendatory of the religion of whose superior sanctity and excellence they were wont to boast. Abraham saw that the honour of the true faith was compromised in the quarrel, and suggested a separation as the deplorable but needful remedy of the evil. And with a condescension and generosity which mark the magnanimity and unselfishness of his soul, he left the choice of that portion of the land, within which he was henceforward to confine himself, to Lot.

It was now that the latent worldliness of Lot's heart disclosed itself. He eagerly seized the advantage tendered to him by his venerable relative, and appropriated it to himself without reluctance or scruple. He expressed no pain at the separation, no apprehension of its evil consequences to himself, no regret at the privation or inconvenience it might cause his relative. He greedily seized the offer as an opportunity to enhance his consequence and his gain. A more spiritual and humble temper might have shrunk from the loss of Abraham's company, and of all the benefits of his counsel, instruction and sympathy, as the greatest of misfortunes, a loss poorly compensated by any worldly profits; and drawn back in dismay from the prospect of going forth alone amidst the seductions of abounding idolatry and corruption. One who rated spiritual good at its true value would have preferred dependence and comparative poverty in Abraham's household, to independence and augmented wealth in the spiritual wilderness that surrounded it. Within it, were truth, holiness, and all those institutions and influences which are calculated to strengthen faith and re-enforce virtuous resolutions. Without it, was nothing that was not fitted to debauch the principles, and weaken the energy of virtuous resolve and holy endeavour. But Lot's religion rose not to such a pitch of virtue. He welcomed the separation as the event which was to emancipate him from restraint and subordination, and set him up as a separate head and chieftain. He did not even offer to waive the option which had been so generously accorded to him, but

proceeded directly to a choice. "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well-watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east; and they separated one from the other. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." They have indeed become a proverb of wickedness to all generations. Yet these were henceforth to be the companions of Lot and of his children. To these people his family allied themselves. In their interests they became implicated, and learned to look with indulgence, if not with complacency, upon their manifold abominations. No wonder that his course subsequently was downward, and that his own history and that of his race ever after was deterioration and disgrace, marked with the dark characters of crime and calamity, moral debasement and the displeasure of God. His choice evidently was governed by worldly considerations. He sacrificed spiritual for temporal good. Ease, plenty, splendour fascinated his eyes, and warped his judgment. Alas! at how dear a price were they gained. If the grace of God preserved him from utter apostacy, "and kept him a name among them that are written in heaven," it is a name blotted and blurred with more of sin than almost any of whom inspiration makes on the whole honourable mention. He was years after taken captive in an assault on the city, and only rescued from destruction by the magnanimous intervention of Abraham. When at last the iniquity of

Sodom was full, he with his daughters was delivered from the awful destruction that involved it by angelic messengers sent in answer to Abraham's prayer. He indeed escaped; but his wife, influenced by a lingering attachment to the pleasures they were leaving behind, "looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt." "Remember Lot's wife," remains a permanent and solemn warning of the word of God. His daughters soon gave evidence of the contaminating effect of the influences to which they had been exposed. They seduced him into sin, and left him no posterity but one dishonoured with the infamy of incest. His descendants were idolaters; and "the children of Lot," the Ammonites and Moabites, till they disappear from the records of history, continued to be among the most determined, bitter, and inveterate enemies of the Church. Such mischief, so terrible, manifold and enduring, accrued from his evil choice.

This is a sad spectacle, but there is nothing peculiar in it. It is not a picture of an age, but of all ages. It is to be seen in this modern world of ours, as it was in that ancient one of the patriarchs. It is everywhere, on every side. Yes, here in our midst, are men who have souls, and do not deny that they are immortal, who are compromising the welfare of the soul for some glittering bauble, and sacrificing the good of eternity to the good of time. The world has many a scene beautiful and fertile as the vale of Sodom; and too many stand ready to go down into it and dwell, without stopping to inquire what is to become of them and their children in that day when "the wrath of God shall be revealed from heaven." Men either utterly

sunken in worldliness, or Christian men of feeble faith and ill-established principles, having their religion sadly debased by admixtures of worldly alloy, are continually making Lot's choice and reaping Lot's reward. Yes, how often do we see men of whom we would fain think well, foregoing spiritual good for secular advantages. Some are making alliances with persons of false creeds or corrupt principles or sinful habits, or at the best destitute of the fear of God, and exposing themselves to the pollution of such associations, for some gain of wealth or position, or, it may be, for little more than the mere delight of the alliance itself. Others are going away from the company of good men, relinquishing the ordinances of God's house, and withdrawing from the restraints and privileges of virtuous and enlightened society, to go where there is "a famine of hearing the word of the Lord," to lands that "sit in darkness," where Christ is unknown or his name dishonoured by superstition and error, to acquire riches, to make themselves a name, to secure some sort of earthly advantages. Of how much less importance in choosing our place of habitation than they should be with Christian men, are wont to be the privileges of the Church, the tone of moral feeling, and the opportunities of religious improvement! Men recklessly send their children, in pursuit of accomplishments, or of something that will bear only on their earthly weal, to be educated by those whose influence will either operate to lead them astray from the paths of truth and holiness, or at the best will interpose no effectual check to prevent their wandering from them. And now what is it to complain, if their offspring walk in the paths of falsehood

or of sin, but to murmur that they "do not gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles?"

Our subject addresses itself with especial force to two classes of persons. To parents. The mischief of Lot's mischoice fell far less heavily upon himself than on his posterity. He was preserved from utter defection, and saved, though "so as by fire." But what ray of hope beams from the life or death of his descendants? So God is wont to "visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations." His virtue had grown hardy enough to resist evil before he went to Sodom. But his children, born there or reared there, found in the atmosphere a moral pestilence, which the influence of his example was altogether insufficient to counteract. When you are forming your associations, selecting your residence, choosing your line of business, fixing your habits of life, or when you are, by the selection of their teachers and companions, or by other means, so far as you may, determining the influences under which the characters of your children are to be formed, remember that they are eternal things, that the fate of unborn millions may be hanging on your acts, lest your children, reared through your silly choice in Sodom, and perishing with Sodom, rise up in the awful judgment and pronounce you the authors of their ruin.

Finally, the young are deeply concerned in this matter. Inevitably they are called to some such choice as Lot's; and if they choose like him, they must reap the disastrous consequences. If they maintain any religious character, it will be with difficulty, it will afford them little comfort, it will shine with feeble light on others.



There is a contest of spiritual and worldly objects for their choice. If they choose the latter, why then the world is their portion, and it and they will perish together. Or if their choice of the former be not thorough and decided, why then the world will always be a miserable element in their religion, to alloy it, deprive it of beauty, vigour and influence, and render their character and destiny questionable and precarious. We do not disguise from them that religion does involve self-denial and the renunciation of the world. They must turn away from the flowery vale, towards some region less attractive to the eye, less richly stocked with the means of immediate pleasure. Yet, it is written that "godliness with contentment is great gain," yes, far the greatest gain, and even in this world, in the lengthened experience of life.

Choose, then, my brethren, whom you will serve. And choose with no half choice. Give your hearts to the Lord freely, generously, fully. Let the salvation that is in Christ Jesus stand unrivalled in your esteem and your affections. The stream of time will soon bear you to the great ocean of endless and unchangeable being. Then, when life is ebbing to its close, you will know the blessedness of having chosen eternal good, and having chosen it firmly, unreservedly and finally. And as earth fades from your sight, there shall open to you an entrance into that world, where the river of the water of life flows for ever, and the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God, with leaf that never withers, and fruits that never decay, shall spread over you its everlasting shadow, and fill you with unending bliss.

## SERMON II.

## THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and put it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.—NUMBERS XXI. 8, 9.

THAT this is a type we might be entitled to infer from the figurative and prophetic character of the system under which it found place. But we have besides the explicit testimony of our Lord himself: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” There are evident and striking resemblances here, and they are not resemblances of accident, not such resemblances as fortuitously arise by recurrence of like conjunctures in the course of ages, but resemblances impressed by the finger of God, for a solemn purpose, provided for in the antecedent with a skilful foresight, and wrought out in the fulfilment with a faithful accuracy. And therefore in tracing and pondering them, we shall not be amusing ourselves with ingenious fancies, but seeking “the mind of the Spirit,” and drawing from it the instruction and profit it was intended to convey. And thus, viewed in a spirit of reverence and sobriety, I think we shall find

this type a topic eminently fitted to guide our meditations on this solemn day.\*

There is before us then a parallelism. Two things are to be set side by side in order that we may note their coincidences, and, viewing these not as accidental but divine, gather from them knowledge, and such impressions as may tend to enliven and re-enforce the life of grace in our souls. We have the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness, and we have Christ lifted up upon the cross, presented to our view together; that by the study of the former, we may the better understand the latter, and from the comparison learn more clearly what our need is, what our remedy, and what its appropriation. With this view I shall point your attention to three coincidences of the type and the antitype, in the examination of which, we shall, if not exhaust our subject, at least, it is thought, draw from it the principal items of instruction which it contains. Let us look then at the need, the remedy, and the appropriation.

1. *The need.* The Israelites had almost completed their forty years' journeying in the wilderness, and were near the confines of Canaan. Aaron had just died on Mount Hor, and his son Eleazar had assumed the priestly office in his stead. But now, when a few more stages in a direct course would have brought them to the borders of Canaan, they were compelled once more to diverge from it in order to make the circuit of the land of Edom, whose king refused them permission to pass through his country, and whose

\* Good Friday.

territorial rights they were commanded sacredly to respect. The change was disheartening, and might be the prelude of they knew not what prolongation of their trials. A whole generation had fallen in the wilderness; and of all those who forty years before had raised the song of triumph on the shore of the sea not far from the spot where they were then standing, not one remained but Moses and Joshua and Caleb. Nearly half a century consumed in wearisome wanderings over sterile wastes, had done little more than bring them back to their original point of departure. And now again the command was given to turn back. They were not to proceed immediately along the shore of the sea, but to compass the land of Edom. Perhaps this was the beginning of a new course of wanderings, in which that generation was to meet the fate of its predecessor. The thought filled them with terror. "The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." The rebellious and complaining spirit of the fathers dwelt in the children. The hearts of men are evil, and the discipline of outward experience alone will never amend them. "And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died."

The people now confessed their sin, and besought the interposition of Moses, and Moses prayed for them. And God graciously sent them a remedy. They were

bitten with fiery serpents, and the bite was fatal. There was no remedy known to man that could counteract the venom. Human skill was powerless against it. The camp was strewn with livid corpses. On every side were heard cries of terror, groans of anguish, and shrieks of lamentation. The dead, the dying and the bereaved were all around; and none knew how soon they would be called themselves to share the fate of the smitten, or see the objects of their affection stricken down at their side. Death was making fearful havoc, and all was consternation and dismay. The cause of this suffering was the presence of fiery serpents in the camp. Perhaps they were fiery in appearance, ruddy and sparkling, and as they shot fiercely and rapidly around, moving over the open spaces of the camp, and gliding beneath the tents, seemed to the panic-stricken people like living flames of fire. Their bite too was inflammatory, and its poison injected into men's veins consumed them with raging fever, and tormented them with burning thirst. Such was the exigency that had arisen. Destruction threatened Israel, and nought but the almighty compassion of Him who in wrath remembers mercy could avert its stroke.

Our case is analogous, far more nearly so than unthinking men are wont to realize. Evils are not by any means to be computed by their conspicuousness. Unseen, insidious dangers are not the smallest. Evils which "assault and hurt the soul," which destroy its health, and plant in it the seeds of decay and ruin, are by no means those which do the least present harm, or betoken the least ulti-

mate mischief. Nay, as they affect that substance which is far more the self of man than any thing that is material and outward, which is the seat of our higher life, and immortal in its nature, they are far more injurious and destructive than any "adversities that may happen to the body." "Their poison is as the poison of a serpent" to that which can never die and find respite in unconsciousness; for the death of the soul is not the end of life, but the end of all that is good in life, life that is nought but a curse. Nay, it is the poison of a serpent, even of "that old serpent called the devil and Satan," the venom of whose bite has sent the diffusive virus of sin and misery down from the first parents of the human race, through the successive generations of their posterity in all their widespread dispersions, a congenital, universal, cleaving evil, making them all from their birth "children of wrath," "deserving in every man born into the world God's wrath and damnation," filling all with "a certain fearful looking for of judgment," and plunging them at last "into the bitter pains of eternal death." Ah! the smitten Israelites in the desert, languishing, writhing, moaning, dying, are but a faint sample and emblem of the condition of universal humanity, fainting, suffering, perishing, under the envenomed stroke of sin.

2. *The Remedy.* This the text describes. "The Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had

bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived."

There are several things here deserving of special notice. The means of cure were arbitrary; they owed all their efficacy to God's authority. He had established no ordinary connexion between the instruments he employed, and the end to be accomplished. There was nothing curative in their nature or their form. Neither the wood nor the brass were medicinal, alone or in combination; nor did they become so under any natural law, the one by being set upright in the ground, or the other by being fashioned into the figure of a serpent. They cured by a special commission; and, that special commission withdrawn, they fell back into the ordinary condition of things of a like nature. The brazen serpent was long preserved among the Israelites as a memorial of its temporary potency, but only as a curiosity, not as a medicine. It was kept merely as an interesting historical relic; and when at last it became an object of superstitious veneration, it was destroyed in the reign of King Hezekiah.\* Now, this serpent lifted up upon a pole was an image of the crucifixion. So said our Lord himself: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the Son of Man be lifted up;" and accordingly "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree." An upright beam of wood in either instance was the medium of man's deliverance, and the burden which it bore brought healing to suffering and dying men. Now it is but indistinctly that we perceive the connex-

\* 2 Kings, xviii. 4.

ion between the death of Christ and the salvation of men. We have theories upon it of greater or less speciousness and value. But we cannot affirm them certain and true. Our faith finally rests on the appointment of God, an appointment not arbitrary, but resting on reasons of the highest fitness: reasons, however, not perfectly revealed. There is healing virtue in the cross, because God has commissioned it to heal. "The preaching of the cross is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;" an offence to human pride and earthly wisdom; "but to them that are saved it is the power of God," because it is the appointment of God, and God honours it and gives it success. And he who hung upon the cross is Jesus, the Saviour of men, because "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the solution. Would created wisdom ever have thought of such a way? It was God's will and wisdom—and his will and his wisdom are always one—and therefore it saves.

Again, the healing substance was fashioned into the similitude of the evil it was appointed to cure. The brass, so far as its own nature went, was as medicinal in one form as another; but by God's direction it assumed the form of a serpent. There it stood in the likeness of a serpent to save from death those whom a deadly serpent had bitten. What is this but "God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin?" He took our nature upon him, and was "found in fashion as a man;" and though "he knew no sin," "God made him to be sin, for



us," and, becoming the substitute of sinners, he was putatively, forensically, a sinner, and was so adjudged, sentenced and punished. Thus, not indeed in the form of that nature that had brought death, but of that into which death had so entered, that by the diffusion of its poison it had become sadly assimilated and united to the source of its debasement and misery, he came to do away the mischief, and say to that wronged and infected nature, "Be whole from thy plague." And thus, in appearance a child of the wicked one, having the nature of those who are indeed his children, standing in their stead, charged with their offences, did the Seed of the woman, in seeming the seed of the serpent, live on earth and die, "by death to destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," and in the guise and character of the serpent's evil progeny, to bruise the serpent's head. And thus was He, the Healer, the Restorer of men, lifted up among men, that "whosoever of them believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

3. *The appropriation.* This was individual. So Hooker well says, "God in Christ is generally the medicine which doth cure the world, and Christ in us is that receipt of the same medicine, whereby we are every one particularly cured." There was a universal remedy, but a discriminating cure. "It shall come to pass, that when a serpent has bitten any man, when he shall look upon it, he shall live." The provision of God made it a conditional remedy; the act of man, an effectual one. Whosoever looked lived. This was a purposed look. The serpent of brass stood in the camp, the

great centre of attraction to the terrified and suffering inmates; and there was not a wretch in all its precincts tormented with the poison in his veins, who could crawl to his tent door, and cast his eyes upon it, who did not instantly experience its healing power, and feel in himself that he was whole of his plague. The cure was immediate, complete and permanent. Not one died that looked. And not one that did not look did not die. For again, as it was the means of cure, so it was the sole means. If any smitten Israelite began to rationalize, and say what virtue is there in a serpent of brass? what good can it do me to go and look upon it? nothing remained for him but to languish on in his pride and skepticism and stubbornness, and in the end to die. And it was no casual looking that would save; it must be a looking of purpose and intention, the looking of a man who came to look. No wandering eye that fell upon it by accident drew virtue from it, nor any glance of idle curiosity or scornful indifference, but only the look of an obedient faith, that saw in it God's ordinance of curing, and submitted to it with a grateful simplicity of soul. It was not being in the camp where it was; this made it but a possible salvation. It was not proximity to it. An inmate of the tent that stood nearest to that wondrous beam and brass, if he refused to look, died just as certainly as he whose station was remotest. It was looking, simply looking, and nothing else but looking, nothing more, nothing other.

Jesus is lifted up that he may draw all men unto him, and all men are urged by their need to come to him for

salvation. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." The yearning hearts of men, longing to be rid of the plague that is consuming them, turn to him as to a common centre, whence alone the healing of their plague is to come forth. And they are cheered in their approaches by an inviting voice, "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth." The great camp of our common humanity in all its outspread expansion resounds with that cry of mercy, and there is not one of all whom it encompasses to whom it may not be as life to the dead. The virtue of the symbol was inexhaustible; so is that of the reality. It could cure millions as easily as one. Of the thousand eyes simultaneously directed to it, each one equally drew forth its power. And when a new crowd of lookers came, they found it just as much in the prime and plenitude of its curative efficacy, as though none had gone before them. Jesus is never weary of saving men, nor is his saving energy diminished by exercise or by time. The cross has lost nothing by being in our world so long. It is as good to us, as to those who stood around it in Golgotha. But men must look at it. The idea that it saves men in a mass by being in the world they inhabit is a miserable delusion. So did not the brazen serpent cure the smitten Israelites. There was room for men to die, if they *would*, after its erection as before, but *only* if they would. Nor will the cross save any man by that sort of proximity to it which is obtained by being in the Church. Men in the Church must *look*, or it will be nothing to them. And some poor heathen who catches a distant

view of it in his wide removal, may rise in the judgment, to condemn those "before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been set forth, evidently crucified among them;" for he with strained and painful vision saw him afar off and was glad, and they, caught by objects more attractive to their worldly hearts, turned on him no look of thoughtful attention and grateful reliance. It is looking, "looking unto Jesus," that saves men. For "this," says Jesus himself, "this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." To what purpose is it then that we hear of the cross, and that the cross is displayed where we are? All this brings the cross into no such relation to us that it saves us, can never transport the virtue that is in it to us, and make it in us a virtue. Faith is a second vision, the vision of the soul. "The evidence of things not seen," it is to us as though we saw them. It brings them to us, sets them before us, informs us what they are, and calls forth our hearts in answering sentiments and affections. We are to-day gathered about the cross. And yet it may be feared that some of us are there with averted eyes. And the malady is upon us, and this will cure it, and this only; and if it does not cure us, we shall die, and the death in which it ends is hopeless and perpetual. No resurrection comes to it; no light shall ever beam upon its eternal darkness. Salvation by the cross is full, free, equally for all, enough for all, "unto all and upon all them that believe." Oh! perish not, perish not, in sight of the cross. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

## SERMON III.

## SAMSON'S RIDDLE.

Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.—JUDGES XIV. 14.

SAMSON is one of those ill-defined personages of Holy Scripture, of whom we scarcely know what to say or to think. His life is full of contradictions. St. Paul sets him down among his eminent examples of faith. He was a Judge of Israel, and a powerful champion and defender of his nation. His achievements were miraculous, and Heaven wrought miracles to defend and succour him. Yet his history is stained with levity and sensuality, deformed with such blemishes indeed as are hardly consistent with the fear and love of God. Whether that faith which is attributed to him was a faith that purified and saved his soul, or only a faith that made him an efficient and conspicuous actor in the Church's external history, is a question not easy to solve. Faith is an element of power sometimes where it is not saving. Any strong persuasion, any earnest belief, nerves the heart and strengthens the arm; and thus a deep and firm conviction may make a mighty and effective actor of one on whose character it exerts no salutary influence. The Crusaders are a striking instance of the power of a belief to produce labour and self-denial in men for an end,

while yet they remain full of worldly passion, and are carried by it into gross crimes and excesses. They were not holy men because they went to a holy war, and were actuated by a lively and energetic faith in the object it contemplated, even though that faith was one which filled them with a certain sort of religious zeal and enthusiasm. Perhaps Samson's faith was of this sort. His death was as ambiguous as his life. We hardly know whether to attribute it to revenge or heroism, to call it self-martyrdom or self-murder. To ascertain the state of men before God, and "take forth the precious from the vile," distinguishing blemished reality from specious falsehood, is not ours. It is God's office. He "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart."

Our text is what is commonly called Samson's Riddle. A riddle is a sort of germinal and undeveloped parable, in which certain points of comparison or resemblance are rather suggested than set forth in detail. It is to the other as an outline sketch to a finished picture. It is a concentrated parable as it were, in which only the leading idea is given, to be expanded by the mind to which it is presented into a perfect image.

The occasion of this riddle was as follows. Samson sought in marriage a daughter of the Philistines who dwelt at Timnath. As he went down in company with his parents to negotiate the alliance, when he had "come to the vineyards of Timnath, a young lion roared upon him. And the Spirit of the Lord came

mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid. And he went down, and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson well. And after a time he returned to take her, and turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and behold! a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion." On the occasion of his marriage Samson made a feast, in accordance with the custom of the country; and as the habit was, "they gave him thirty companions to be with him," as his special retinue during the festivities. These nuptial attendants are probably the same as "the children of the bride chamber," mentioned by our Lord. One of these is John the Baptist's "friend of the bridegroom." The institutions of the East are very unchanging, and its usages go on without alteration from generation to generation. To the more mercurial mind of Western races only is novelty agreeable. The Oriental mind loves to run in channels that have been worn for it by the past, and to do as multitudes have done in days gone by. To these companions of his wedding festivities Samson proposed the riddle before us. "Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it unto me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirtysheets and thirty changes of garments: but if ye cannot declare it me, then ye shall give me thirty sheets and thirty changes of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle that we may hear it. And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." The riddle was suggested by the

incident of the honey in the lion's carcass, and in this it had its solution. But as the circumstance was known only to himself, and had never been divulged to any one, the young men were destitute of any clue to his meaning, and tasked their ingenuity in vain to discover the secret so darkly hinted in his sententious words. At last, despairing of success, and angry at the prospect of defeat by their astute visiter, they prevailed upon his wife by intimidation, to draw the explanation from him and communicate it to them. By these dishonourable means they succeeded. Her importunities prevailed. Samson told her the meaning of his riddle. And her countrymen, by knowledge thus unworthily obtained, gave him the true solution within the appointed time, and won the reward he had offered. "And it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people. And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?" Samson readily divined the source of their information, and spoke out the bitter contempt and vexation of his heart, at his own weakness, his wife's treachery, and their disgraceful meanness, in the disdainful and sarcastic comment, "If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle." When the people of God form alliances with Philistines, above all make marriages with them, they can reasonably expect nothing better than treachery and faithlessness in their social relations, and to be preyed upon and injured in all their



interests by those, whose show of friendship in these ill-assorted bonds, is but a cover of hatred, selfishness and rapacity. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

Such are the original application and purpose of Samson's riddle. But there lies in it a broader significance, deeper truth, truth of permanent value, truth applicable oftentimes to the events and circumstances of life, truth that teaches us to recognise and admire the hidden and wonderful wisdom of God's ways, and counsels us to wait in patience and in hope the development of good to us out of frowning providences, threatening dangers, and circumstances full of offence, that awaken in our hearts at first nothing but terror, loathing and discomfort.

In this sense, it is the Riddle of Life.

Ah, indeed! it is not to Samson alone that the eater affords meat, and the strong gives forth sweetness. It is so more or less to us all. Some of the best things we gain in this world, the richest food and nourishment of our souls, come forth from that which at first threatens to devour us, which comes to us originally with the aspect of a destroyer seeking "to eat up our flesh," to lay waste our heritage, and with its hungry jaws consume our possessions and our life. And yet, if with a courageous and dauntless heart we meet its onset, our arm may be strengthened to vanquish and destroy it. And then, in God's good time, the eater shall yield us meat; and we shall find, it may be indeed not till after many days, but we shall surely find some time or another, in its stripped and purified ruins, food

that shall help to build us up, and strengthen us and nourish us unto life eternal. And so too shall the strong yield sweetness to us, some of the principal enjoyments and delights of life arising from the wrecks of things which at our first encountering them were only an appearance of savage and hostile power, and, which, even when successfully resisted and overcome, in the first stages of their decay, were noisome and disgusting only—for I suppose the word strong in my text may have some such double meaning—but which, when time and the Lord's goodness have cleansed and corrected them, acquire a strange treasure of pleasure and satisfaction for us, and yield us in the end, meat good for food and pleasant to the taste. Truly, not only "in the wilderness" did God "break the heads of Leviathan in pieces and give him to be meat for his people;" he is always doing so. The ugly shapes that are continually starting up in our paths, coming forth from the thickets that border them, assaulting us in the gayest scenes, on our errands of love and hope and happiness, if they are met and beaten down by the resolved heart and vigorous arm of a true Christian valour, as they may be if we are only "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," in time, show that they were, in all their terrific and threatening appearance, forecasting provisions of the Lord's love; and, thus vanquished and slain, turn into sources of strength and enjoyment to us, and when again we light upon the place of the encounter and victory, we find honey in the monster, meat in the eater, and sweetness in the strong, and we may put forth our hand

and take and eat of it in safety to the refreshment and joy of our souls. But all this depends upon the way in which we meet the evil. If we meet it courageously, and overcome it, it will in time afford us food and pleasure. But if we succumb to it, and are vanquished by it, it will be only what it is in its own proper nature. It will never moulder down into a home of industrious and useful bees, and a hive of savoury and nutritious honey. Rather, "the wild beast will tear us," it will "rend the caul of our heart." And we shall moulder into nothingness, and "leave our name a curse unto God's chosen," and our life a wreck, without good fruit to ourselves or to others.

Look at moral evil. Truly "the devil as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour;" and temptation is his chosen agency, the seductive forms of wickedness, "the deceitfulness of sin," put forward to "beguile unstable souls," and draw them within the reach of his ruinous embraces. And its assaults are often fierce and violent, and fitted to fill the soul with dread. So that the tempted heart may well cry out in its dismay, "Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces while there is none to deliver." Yet there is a strength for mortal man in that sore conflict in the might of which "the feeble may be as David," even the strength of Him who makes his strength perfect in man's weakness, whose grace is sufficient for us, by whose "ready help" we are "more than conquerors," who will not only rescue us, but even "bruise Satan under our feet." For in all his rage, the tempter is but a conquered enemy, and fights in

chains, and only with such limited liberty as will in the end render his defeat more sure and his destruction more signal. He has come whose office it is "to destroy the works of the devil;" and in his might, the feeblest Christian, taking to him the armour of God, may "withstand in the evil day," and even beat down his enemy in the battle. And Oh! if he do, his victory shall not be barren, but most gainful and productive, and Satan shall be forced to nurture and refresh the life he sought to destroy: "out of the eater shall come forth meat, and out of the strong shall come forth sweetness." From the soil of temptation spring the soul's best attainments, healthiest growths, rapidest advances, its richest fruitfulness, its choicest pleasures. "Happy is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." A sense of our weakness may well lead us to pray that God would not lead us into it; and yet a wise and enlightened view of the Christian life will show, that, well endured, it is turned into a pregnant blessing, a most prolific source of improvement and happiness. A temptation that vanquishes us is indeed solely a foe and a curse; but a temptation vanquished is a friend in fact, as it is a foe that means us harm, but is, by an overmastering power, pressed into our service to do us a more than counterbalancing good. Let a man look over his life, and view his best gains and highest pleasures, and see if they have not arisen out of his temptations, his moral trials, exposures and conflicts, if they are not all the memorials of victories over him-

self and over the world, each one the fruit of some desire suppressed, some influence resisted, some determination not to do evil when solicited to do it, to do good when powerfully dissuaded, some saying in his heart, "Get thee behind me Satan," some fulfilment of the promise, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." And all the sense we have of liberty and power in serving God, and all the joy we have in God's favour and the hope of heaven, are evermore the result of spiritual perils and conflicts, honey in the carcass of the lion, the meat and the sweetness that have gathered for us in the wreck of slain appetites and resisted enticements, meat from the eater, and sweetness from the strong.

Look at outward trouble. How truly is this an eater and a strong eater, a devourer of man!—how extensive its ravages!—what region of his life does it not invade, what path of his mortal pilgrimage has it not strewn with wrecks and trophies of its power? For it is strong by the commission of God, who sends it among men as the token of his displeasure at them, the memorial of their fall and sinfulness, and not less also, the instrument of his healing and reclaiming mercy. Strong indeed it is, so that nothing that is earthly can stand before it, no barriers arrest its progress, no walls forbid its entrance. Man's wisdom and wealth and strength and greatness it alike derides, laying them all waste, consuming them with an insatiable voracity, sweeping them all away as with "the besom of destruction," entering into his palaces and towers, and spoiling their treasure and their beauty and

their armament. And how wide and impartial is its sweep! Who does not feel its power, and know by sad experience the feebleness of man before it? For "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;" it is just as much a law of his being; and therefore the record of human life is always the story of broken hopes and blasted purposes, of smitten loves, of abortive desires, faded prospects, lost joys, and withered acquisitions. Yet even over this monster, so grim, cruel, stern, and relentless, there is a victory for man, the victory of an inward calmness, an unconquerable trust, a cheerful resignation, and an undying hope. The prescription for it simply is, "In your patience possess ye your souls." The heart that can say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" trouble can pain, but cannot conquer. Nay, the harmer is conquered in his own seeming victory; for the frail thing that he thinks to rend, in the might of love and faith rends him as a strong man might rend a kid. What trouble is to us depends on whether we let it conquer us, or conquer it by remaining tranquil and trustful and inwardly happy by the grace of God under its fierce assaults. And a conquered trouble becomes always in the end a storehouse of nutrition and delight to us in our true life. The skeletons of sorrows, cleansed and bleached by the kindly influence of time, are turned into receptacles, whither busy workers, sent on their errand by the God of love, bring treasures of food and sweetness for us; and when we visit them again, we find them hives, and take thence honey and eat it to our nourishment and satisfaction. The graves of buried

griefs grow green and flowery; and the noisomeness of decay sends up rich fruits and fragrant blossoms. "No chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." "This light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Yes, trouble well borne is not merely conquered, it is subsidized and fertilized, made conducive to our welfare, tributary to our gain. Grim and terrible it looks in its approach, as if it were ready to devour us; but if it is met in a spirit of trust and submission, it is slain; and out of its ashes shall certainly grow such spiritual strength and gladness, as can spring from no other source. And so here again, the experience of his people shows how in the ordering of God's mysterious wisdom, to them that love and rely upon him, out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness.

Finally, look on death. This is the greatest devourer of all, the most frightful and mighty and unrelenting. There is no discharge in the war that it wages, no exception to its universal sway. "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? and shall he deliver his soul from the hand of hell?" Here is a battle in which every man must in the end be worsted. And yet man may be even death's conqueror. A Man indeed has conquered death, and for the race; and now no man is conquered by him but he who foolishly yields him a triumph. The Chris-

tian's submission to death is but apparent. He conquers him in letting him have his way. He becomes deathless by dying. Christ "hath abolished death," and henceforward over all that are in Christ his triumph is but a piece of pageantry, a sham success, that is in truth the most complete and deadly of defeats. And conquered death is forced into man's service. "That devouring monster, that king of terrors, being robbed of his sting and stripped of his horror, transmits the believer's soul to the realms of bliss, and makes way for the body itself, being restored incorruptible, immortal and glorious, to partake of endless felicity." Look, what it did for Christ, the representative Man. See, what nutriment it ministered to his life. See, with what enhancement of strength and joy he comes forth from its impotent embrace. It thought to hold him always; but "he could not be holden of it" beyond the shortest space. The soul of the Holy One was not left in hell, and his flesh did not see corruption. And contrast his life before death with his life after it. See him, in the first, "a man of sorrows," with "not where to lay his head," "the scorn of men and outcast of the people," "numbered with the transgressors," and "brought as a lamb to the slaughter." But death comes as it might seem to complete the triumph of enmity and injustice, and lo! it proves an emancipator, an ennobler, a nourisher, a gladdener. He was "crucified through weakness," but he rises "the Son of God with power." Tears and suffering are past, and God anoints him "with the oil of gladness above his fellows;" and "he shall



reign till he has put all enemies under his feet." So it shall be to his followers. He is our Forerunner, and death shall do for us what it did for him. By faith we conquer it, and this is not merely to restrain it from doing us harm, but to compel it to do us good, make it our slave, force it to become subservient to our welfare. Indeed there is nothing else in all our history that works so blessed a change in our condition as death. Infirmity, sin, suffering, dimness of mind, weakness of heart, all it purges away. Where its salutary hand has passed, all things are new, all things are better. The sick are well, the decrepit and exhausted are again young, they who saw through a glass darkly, behold face to face, they who felt after God see the King in his beauty, and they who lived on thoughts and shadows of good things to come, enter into and inhabit the heavenly places. Death, in will our destroyer, is against his will our friend. Temptation ended and turned to a good, trouble past and transformed to a blessing, death at last is swallowed up in victory. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." And so the Riddle of Life is solved; for "out of the eater has come forth meat, and out of the strong has come forth sweetness."

## SERMON IV.

E L I.

For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And, therefore, I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever.—1 SAMUEL III. 13, 14.

IN Eli we have one in whom great and varied excellence is fatally marred by a single fault. And yet, even that fault was at least amiable, akin to a form of goodness, and capable of a specious apology and extenuation. It was but an excess and misdirection of parental love. His story forms a striking exemplification of the truth of Solomon's maxim, that, as "a dead fly" in the otherwise fragrant and precious "ointment of the apothecary," renders it fetid and loathsome, so does "a little folly" ruin the fame of "him who is in reputation for wisdom and honour." Alas! for his historic name, that Eli, the pious priest and upright magistrate, is also the father of the profligate Hophni and Phinehas, unrestrained by a father's authority, unpunished by a father's power, and very insufficiently checked by a father's mild example and gentle remonstrance. That father was venerable for years, for station, and for character. He united in himself the highest civil and ecclesiastical dignities of the nation. He was both Judge and High-priest of

Israel. Never before had one of the sacerdotal race attained this distinction. Representing the illustrious line of Aaron through Eleazar, he succeeded to the high-priesthood by hereditary descent. And he had been called to the office of Judge or supreme temporal ruler, by divine providence, perhaps by direct appointment of God. In the varied functions of his double dignity he had acted with such integrity and wisdom, as to conciliate the universal esteem and confidence of his countrymen; and thus he had grown old, and was verging to the close of a life marked in no common degree with usefulness, prosperity and honour.

But in this fair scene there was a blot, not large and conspicuous in the eyes of men, but great and offensive in the sight of God. And this was destined to darken the closing scene of all this venerable beauty, and leave the name of Eli on the pages of God's word a warning, and not an example. Eli had been a too indulgent father; and in the closing years of his life, the evil fruits of his unwise and injurious tenderness were developed in consequences fatal to his peace in life and his reputation in death. This brought down at last "his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." This drew upon him the awful rebuke and displeasure of his Maker. This entailed misery and disgrace on successive generations of his descendants. And this has made his story, with all that it presents of what is reverend and beautiful, useful chiefly in the way of alarm and admonition.

Eli was the father of two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, the latter bearing the name of one of the most

illustrious of his ancestors, the zealous son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron, whose decision and energy, by a deed of painful severity, stayed the progress of iniquity among his countrymen, when they were beguiled into idolatry and lewdness by the arts of Moab and Midian at Shittim in the wilderness, led on by the wily counsels of Balaam, defeated in his direct attempts to injure Israel, but still bent on mischief, and "loving the wages of unrighteousness"—an honourable name dishonoured by a degenerate inheritor. Hophni and Phinehas were priests, by virtue of their lineage, and had entered on the discharge of their priestly functions long before the death of their venerable father. But they disgraced their sacred office by their shameless licentiousness and rapacity. Religion was dishonoured in their persons, and the service of God was rendered unpopular, and even odious, by the character and conduct of its ministers. Thus they who should have been chief promoters became principal hinderers of God's cause and worship. "Wherefore," says the sacred historian, "the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord; for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." To this wickedness of his sons the aged priest opposed nothing but words of mild reproof, which fell with little power on men, whose desires pampered by long and unlimited indulgence, and swollen by the pride of consequence and the wantonness of power, treated such feeble checks with contempt and derision. Neither the authority of a father, nor the power of a magistrate, were employed to impose more effectual restraints upon their evil

ways. The father's faint, querulous entreaty—"Why do ye such things? Nay, my sons, ye make the Lord's people to transgress. It is no good report that I hear,"—proved no impediment in the way of their headstrong passions. "Eli," we are told, "was very old;" and in that decay of firmness and energy which attends the decline of life, are to be found the solution and apology of this miserable weakness. Yet this did not avail with God. And why? Doubtless because it was the sequel of a weak indulgence practised at an early day and under less excusable circumstances. Eli had not grown weakly indulgent first when the powers of nature were failing; nor had Eli's sons jumped by a sudden spring from a life of virtue to such depths of profligacy and vileness. Eli had all along been educating his sons to be what they had become. Indulgence now, when they had become notoriously wicked, was but the consistent carrying out of indulgence practised while their character was forming. He had been bringing them up to be vile, while he had full possession and exercise of those powers by which he might have restrained and corrected their obliquities; and now it would not avail him as a shield against the responsibility, that he had lost the resolution to punish their vileness. Pure example and wise instruction had been afforded them in vain; but there had never been a very firm and efficient exercise of authority over them. He had taught and counselled and reprov'd them well; but he had been too fond of them to restrain and punish them. And now they were vile, and set at defiance an authority

they had never been taught to honour; and he must bear the bitter penalty, in the sight of their degradation and destruction, in the displeasure of God, in an old age of sorrow, in a death of anguish, in national calamity and domestic afflictions in his lifetime, and the foresight of a long entailment of loss and suffering on his posterity.

The youthful Samuel was made the instrument of declaring to Eli the displeasure of God; and the stern message seems to gain additional severity as it falls from the lips of the innocent and awe-struck child, who was appointed to bear it—"Behold! I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever." This denunciation echoes and confirms a former message of greater minuteness and particularity which had been previously sent him by a man of God. "There came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Behold! the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine

house forever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread." Here is death, loss of hereditary dignity and consequence, abject poverty and degradation. Surely, if the penalty be an index of the crime—and we are to remember, that this is not the erring justice of men, but the perfect righteousness of God—the criminality of Eli, venial though it seem according to the rules of human judgment, was truly great and awful. And the fault of parental laxity, though men rate it lightly, is, in the sight of God, whose judgment is never false or disproportionate, who traces all causes accurately to their results, and discerns infallibly their extent and quality, a sin of fearful magnitude and enormity, and must be accounted by him one of the most prolific sources of evil which the world exhibits.

This sentence on Eli was executed with a terrible amplitude and exactness. A few years passed rapidly away. Samuel attained manhood, and "was established to be a prophet of the Lord." War broke out between Israel and the Philistines. The ark of the covenant, superstitiously accounted the sure pledge of

safety and success, the palladium of the nation, was carried into the camp, as though its presence must ensure a victory. But borne by polluted hands, it brought wrath rather than defence. "There was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty-thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain." "Eli," meanwhile, "sat upon a seat by the wayside watching; for his heart"—a true and loyal heart, though a weak and erring one—"trembled for the ark of God." "Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see." The messenger of evil tidings came, and abruptly told him of the battle and its disastrous issues. Life sunk beneath the shock. "He fell from off his seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died; for he was an old man and heavy." But calamity did not end here. The wife of Phinehas, overcome by the heavy news, died in giving birth to a son prematurely born, an orphan from his birth, and left him in his name a memorial of misfortune and grief: "She named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed." Still, the office of high-priest continued for a time in the family of Eli. But they were doomed to suffer. His grandson, Ahimelech, with many of his priestly associates, probably the chief part of them his immediate kindred, fell a victim to the cruel jealousy of Saul, when "Doeg, the Edomite," at his command, in punishment of their supposed sympathy with the pretensions of David, "fell upon the priests, and slew four score and five persons that did



wear a linen ephod." Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, in the latter years of David's reign, was seduced from his loyalty, and took part in the rebellion of Adonijah. Solomon pardoned the traitorous priest, but thrust him out of the honours and functions of his office, and sent him in disgrace from the court. "So," says the sacred historian, "Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the Lord; that he might fulfil the word of the Lord, which he spoke concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh." The high-priesthood was thereupon transferred to the line of Ithamar, the younger son of Aaron, and the family of Eli disappears from the page of history.

Now, my dear brethren, what is of chief importance to us in the impressive case which has been presented for our consideration, is its bearing on our own interests and duties. This Scripture, like others, was "written for our learning." It describes beings like ourselves, living under the government of the same God, ruled, judged, and rewarded according to the same holy and immutable principles. We have no reason to suppose that we are living under a moral regimen materially different from that which obtained in the days of Eli; or that our conduct under it will fail to bring substantially similar results to ourselves and to others. Our chief difference lies in clearer light and richer grace. But if these bring enhanced hope and augmented ability, so do they increase our responsibility and exposure. For of them to whom much is given, justly will much be required.

Let me then remind you, first, that a parent is a

ruler by appointment of God, and is held at God's bar accountable for the office and work of a ruler. It is perfectly manifest, that for want of vigour and faithfulness in this department of his duty Eli was censured, condemned and punished. It was not as the pattern or the instructor of his children that he had failed, but as their governor; and no excellence in either of the former respects could atone for his shortcoming in the latter. His "sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not"—this was the burden of the charge, and the ground of the condemnation. He had not misled them by his example, nor corrupted them by his teaching; but he had failed in an efficient exercise of discipline to coerce and chastise them. Under the influence of a mistaken tenderness, he had shrunk from thwarting their inclinations, and punishing their faults. As the result, they were vile, and he was held answerable and guilty. A parent then is more than an example and an instructor; and no exactness and fidelity in these respects will meet the measure of his obligations. He is one of those "powers that be, that are ordained of God," and, in his sphere, is appointed and required to be a terror to evil-doers, and for a praise to them that do well. The family is a divine polity of which he is the head; and as such, in it he is the image and representative of God, with a portion of whose power he is correspondently clothed. And what is a polity without laws? and what are laws without penalties? and what are penalties without punishments? There must be an exercise of coercive authority, and an administration

of punitive justice, if that polity is to answer its truly holy and benevolent purpose. I speak not now of one form of punishment or of another; of the utility of physical inflictions or the preferableness of a different description of penalties; whether Solomon's words in reference to the rod are to be taken literally or with a greater latitude of meaning. I speak of coercion and restraint, as essential features of the domestic economy by the ordinance of God, in the neglect of which its duties cannot be fulfilled, nor its benefits fully reaped. Too many are wont in this day to regard the whole subject of punishment, whether in the family or the state, under the misleading influence of a weak sensibility and a counterfeit benevolence. But He, whose love is far purer and truer than any known to man, has appointed it to man as a needful restraint and a salutary remedy; and we shall never find our wisdom or our welfare in any vain attempt to criticise or amend the ordinance of God.

Lastly, let me remind you that a child is a being that needs restraint and coercion. False theories of education are mainly built on the basis of a false estimate of the moral condition of human nature. Starting with the false position that the child has nothing in it but elements of good, which only need to be drawn out and developed in order to the production of a pure and lovely character, and protected during their growth from the corrupting operation of evil influences from without, it overlooks the solemn truth, that, mingled with these elements, are prolific seeds of evil, which need to be eradicated with a firm and steady

hand, and resolutely repressed upon their first shooting forth and growth. No theory of education can be successful that looks upon a child as any thing else but a depraved and sinful being, sinful in nature, and sure to be sinful in practice. Hence, the failure of a thousand pretty schemes, which, overlooking the great truth that underlies all well-constructed plans for the training of human beings, prove nothing but "a wall daubed with untempered mortar." The true work of moral training is, like all other true works of men, a warfare also, undertaken and prosecuted against contrary influences and opposite tendencies, which nature does not aid, but opposes. Parents have the world, the flesh, and the devil to hinder their success. They have, for the subject of their labours, not a pure and pliant thing which they have only to mould and direct, but a perverse and stubborn thing which they need to correct and constrain. Hence it is that they are constituted governors, and clothed with power to enforce the laws which God has made for them, or which they make under commission from God. Hence, so large a part of their work lies in the disagreeable business of coercion and restraint. Hence, "a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame." Hence, the many failures which an ill-taught and ill-administered, though well meaning and pains-taking nurture, is doomed to encounter. Hence, children ruined by parental indulgence, grow up to be their parents' scourge and shame, and hand down the mischiefs of the error to their posterity of the third and fourth generation. True, it is not in man's power to change the heart.

That is the prerogative of God only. But he that works by divine rules, with faith in divine promises and divine methods, will not be apt to lack a divine blessing. God at the font met you with a pledge to make your children his. His grace is given you to help you work, and them to make your work effectual upon them. Only do God's work not at halves but according to his prescription, and he will crown it with an abundant blessing. Then, "your sons shall grow up as the young plants, and your daughters be as the polished corners of the temple."

## SERMON V.

## THE CHILDREN OF THE DAY.

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness.—1 THESSALONIANS V. 5.

THIS is very beautiful; and in important and interesting respects, true. It is full of admonition and encouragement. If we are the children of the light and of the day, we have no excuse for our sins, and great and precious advantages for securing our salvation. The Church, to-day,\* in the Collect, teaches us that since Jesus, the "light of the world," has once come in great humility to illuminate and save mankind, and will "come again in glorious majesty to judge and reward them," we, the subjects of such wonderful condescension and the expectants of such solemn retribution, ought constantly to pray for grace to enable us to "cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light;" that we may be indeed the children of light and of the day, and not incur the awful and aggravated condemnation of those, who, when "light has come into the world," "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

The text affirms of the Thessalonians—and in no respect was it true of them in which it is not equally, if not more true of us—that they were "all the children of the light and the children of the day."

\* Advent Sunday.

But while this is true of us all, it is not true of all in the same sense or degree. Illumination is various and unequal. It can be affirmed of different men only in different measures; and while in its lowest form, it is the involuntary, unsought, too often unvalued privilege of all whose lot a kind Providence has cast where "the darkness is past and the true light shineth," in its higher kinds, it is the attainment, the difficult and laborious attainment, of those only, who by faithful improvement of the means of acquiring knowledge and cultivating faith and holiness, have "no part dark, the whole being full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give them light."

There is indeed a sense in which the "true light lighteth every man that cometh into the world." There is no place where the darkness is utter and complete. Straggling beams from the great Luminary of the world, find their way into its darkest corners, and irradiate the most benighted of its inmates. None can tell how much of truth, and of truth, which, despite the falsehood and corruption by which it is surrounded and oppressed, may yet operate with saving efficacy, mingles in the creeds and rites of heathenism; nor to what extent the grace of God may enlighten the consciences and purify the hearts of men, who have no explicit knowledge of the Gospel, or formal faith in the Saviour of sinners. There is, in my opinion, such a thing as a constructive and latent faith, latent because it lacks instruction and liberty, opportunity of development and distinct disclosure, that feeds on such scanty supplies as it gains access to, and though

rather an inclination and yearning to believe than a positive belief, owing to the mists of ignorance that choke and conceal it, may yet be salvation to its possessor, being "accounted to him for righteousness," by Him, with whom "a man is accepted according to that he hath and not according to that he hath not," and who will not overlook or despise any glimmering of faith which his own Spirit has enkindled. To such however it is not my design to direct your attention further. The apostle wrote to Christians; and to Christians in some of the appropriate senses of the word, I shall confine my examination.

And first, it is evident that all those on whom the true light shines are, in a very important sense, "the children of the day." Of them it is true that they "that sat in darkness saw great light, and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." Christendom is the domain of light as contrasted with the early world or the regions beyond. Its very dimmest parts are luminous in comparison with any portion of the world to which the rays of the Gospel have not penetrated. None can dwell where the Gospel is known without deriving from it great accessions of knowledge on most important and essential questions. What elsewhere is conjecture, surmise, hope, there is certainty, and ranks with the axioms and postulates of spiritual science. What heathen sages, by the reflection and research of a life, laboured to make probable, the Christian child learns at its mother's knee, and grows up to know and believe with an implicit and unwavering



confidence, yea, and many things besides, which the efforts of natural reason were never able so much as to excogitate even into the rudest sketch or outline. There is a large class of truths, and those among the most valuable and interesting to man, which it costs a man in Christendom more effort to doubt, than it requires a heathen man to apprehend or imagine. The faith which men entertain in such truths rests not generally in formal demonstrations. This it does not need, it outruns. It embraces them by a certain innate sense and instinctive recognition of their truth. Once declared they are as difficult to reject, as they were to discover previous to their declaration. Revelation is but the echo, or rather the articulate utterance, of sounding voices which have been whispering in the ears of men inarticulately from the beginning; and when at last they speak plainly, the souls of men cannot choose but recognise and welcome them as fulfilments of "prophecies going before," completions and realizations of vague hopes and indistinct wishes antecedently cherished. It is as though the souls of men, mute for ages, had at last found a tongue to speak thoughts which have been long wandering through them formless and unreal, haunting them like shadowy spectres; and in the act of speaking them, find them suddenly invested with substance, figure and life. We cannot tell how much we owe to the privilege of being born and educated where the fundamental principles of religion and morals are understood and admitted, and we have grown up in an acquaintance with them, under their imperceptible but constant and powerful influence.

The being of God, his unity and holiness, the immortality of man, his accountability, moral distinctions, and the rules of practical duty, are among the first truths we learn. And they are very influential and ennobling truths. Life has to us a meaning, an importance, and a dignity, which it cannot have where these are unknown. The human being is invested by them with a worth and grandeur which nothing else can communicate. Man learns in view of them to respect himself and his work, to rise above the pursuit of the mean and the transitory, and seek his portion in the glorious and eternal. These, however, are but elemental truths. The Gospel contains much more, yea, and much that is more precious. It is a system of salvation. It looks upon us in our lost estate. It describes it. It prescribes for it. It portrays us just as we are. It offers us just such remedies as we need. The more the reason and conscience are enlightened, the clearer does its evidence appear, the fuller of insight and of wisdom, of an insight and wisdom divine; the more legible grows the stamp of divinity upon it, as proceeding from Him who knows what is in man, and with exquisite judgment and goodness, fits his supplies and appointments to man's wants and susceptibilities. How much our social and individual happiness and elevation are advanced by these causes we cannot tell, could never judge unless we were to remove into "the dark places of the earth;" nor then fully, unless we could rid ourselves of that personal illumination which would still make for us an oasis of light in the gloom, and transfuse ourselves wholly into

the consciousness of one of its benighted inhabitants. Yes, indeed, we are all the children of the day. There is nothing we need to know concerning God or ourselves, time or eternity, duty or salvation, which is hidden from us. The light shines in our dwellings and irradiates our paths. It dawns upon our cradles and lingers upon our graves. From a child we know the Holy Scriptures, "which are able to make us wise unto salvation." "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in our streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the opening of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words." A thousand voices call us to "eschew evil and do good," "cease to do evil and learn to do well." Wheresoever we are, whithersoever we go, "our ears hear a word behind us, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when we turn aside to the right hand, and when we turn aside to the left."

But there is a second and higher sense in which we are the children of the day, as we are baptized into the body of Christ, and made to partake of the privileges of the Church. And this also is happily true of most of us; sad to think! that in a land that calls itself Christian, it should be untrue of any. The ancient fathers often called Baptism illumination; because it introduced and pledged to its recipients the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit. And doubtless the advantage of baptized persons in this respect is not unreal or imaginary, however dark the actual condition of the minds and lives of many of their number. The perverseness or negligence of men or their spiritual guardians must never lead us to doubt

the reality of God's gifts, the sufficiency of his means, or the sincerity of his promises. Doubtless, Baptism does offer to men peculiar opportunities of outward religious instruction. The Church of God is put in charge of the spiritual education of its members; and this charge, without throwing off, it specially delegates to chosen and appointed agents. A most important and interesting part of the commission of every Bishop of the Church, and under him of every inferior minister, is, "Feed my lambs." Every Christian congregation is bound to see that provision is made for the training of the young within its borders in the knowledge of truth and duty. Christian parents by their natural obligations, Christian sponsors by their voluntary engagement, are required to see that the baptized "child be taught so soon as it is able to learn all that a Christian ought to know and believe to its soul's health." If the provisions of the Church are complied with, four persons, the pastor, the parents, and at least one sponsor besides, are held responsible for the religious training of every child, which in the name of its Divine Head, it receives into "the arms of his mercy." The baptized child then is not left to gain light by such accidental opportunities as it may meet with in a land of light. There are those whose duty and business it is to seek it out and take pains with its instruction. Its privilege is to be followed by the affectionate solitudes, the tender admonitions, the gentle teachings of loving hearts. They lead its yet tottering feet to the house of God, and "call upon it to hear sermons." They teach its lisping tongue to utter "the

Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and answer the questions which in the Short Catechism are contained." "Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," amid the sweet charities and influences of home, by quiet hearths, with morning's light, and day's decline, the father's counsels, the mother's teachings, "drop as the rain and distil as the dew." And God, "that keepeth covenant and mercy to them that fear him," whose "promise is to you and your children," will aid the work and make it saving. Oh! if there is no such effectual work of God, it is because, only because, there is no such work of man to base it upon, for it to aid and sanctify and crown,—no work at all, or only a work, irregular, unsteady, listless or unwise. God keeps his promise to the children of his covenant. He comes to them, insinuates truth into their opening minds, touches their consciences with a sense of duty, a knowledge of good and evil, and enkindles in their hearts aspirations after the holy, the heavenly and the immortal. And if such happy beginnings are stifled and destroyed through want of proper co-operation,—alas! how frequently they are,—it is through the carelessness, or the not less injurious and reprehensible ignorance, of the guardians to whom the nurture of them is committed. It is painful to think, how many germs of divine things, "things that accompany salvation," are lost through the prevalence of false theories stereotyped, as it were, upon the public mind. Parents and sponsors, taught to look for good to their charge only as the result of conversion in mature years, labour-

ing only with prospective reference to a future and contingent juncture, see the workings of religious thought and inquiry in the young without interest and encouragement; and so, the springing seed unrecognised and unvalued is left to be choked by the thorns and briars that throng and overshadow it, and brings no fruit to perfection. Ah! my dear brethren, "the promise is to you and to your children." Baptism is illumination in design at least; and by virtue of it they are in a special sense "the children of the light and of the day." God will teach them if you will. God does teach them in advance of your agency, and invites you to co-operate. And if his teaching is ineffectual, and they grow up in darkness, and go on in darkness, it is because in your blindness you neither observe his work nor understand his promise, but confide in a different work and a different promise, far less precious and less accordant with the economy of grace.

But there is still another form and grade of illumination, by virtue of which, the partakers of it are made in a still higher and more glorious sense the children of the light and of the day. This is that illumination which reaches the heart and the life, and brings them under the practical control of the truth which it communicates. This is the end and design of all inferior illuminations. All that the diffusive Christianity of the land teaches its people, or the instructions, institutions and peculiar grace of the Church offer to communicate to its members, is subservient to this design, and accomplishes but a very meager and inadequate result without it. No brilliant coruscations

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of the fancy to furnish materials for religious poetry or religious eloquence, no cold lustre of reason to supply means of argumentation for defence or controversy, is the proper fruit of the true light. "The day must dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts." It must so enlighten us as to persuade us to "put off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light," to "walk as children of light," to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." To little purpose do we boast ourselves in this title because we are dwellers in a Christian country or members of a Christian church. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." All short of this is a very low improvement of divine gifts. A spiritual illumination, one that takes hold upon the moral and active powers of our nature, that quickens the conscience, that controls the will, that hallows the affections, that gives truth supremacy and dominion, that stamps the visible impress of every revelation it makes upon the character and practice, is the illumination that makes us children of the day in the only sufficient sense, and thereupon heirs of salvation. The truth of the Gospel is all practical. No part of it is without a bearing upon the character, the interior condition of the heart, and the outward fashion of the life. Throughout, it is instinct with motive and impulsion. Its aim is to produce this sentiment, feeling, resolution, act. It is duly honoured, rightly successful, when the sentiment, feeling, resolution, act, appropriate, follows. Obedience to the light thus renders men properly children of the light.

And he is a child of the light in the highest and fullest acceptation, who, being full of knowledge, submits his heart and life most perfectly to its authority.

Our subject is profitable for admonition. We are all the children of the light and of the day in some of the lower senses—alas! how many of us fail of being such in any higher. How many of us are there whose character befits only an era, a land, a state, of darkness; whose whole tone of feeling and living only suits the case of creatures who are destitute of such knowledge of God and eternity, duty and salvation, as we enjoy. Ah, indeed! beings who know that they live under the government and inspection of the Supreme, that they are immortal and accountable, redeemed by the blood of Christ, on trial for eternity, and momentarily liable to be called to judgment and inevitable retribution, live as we do, so thoughtlessly, so frivolously, so sinfully! The light is to such but the justification and security of a severer condemnation. We have no cloak, no excuse, no palliation, for our sins. “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.” “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” “For he that knew his Master’s will, and did it not,”—and Oh how righteously!—“shall be beaten with many stripes.”

But our subject ministers encouragement even more strongly. Its voice is that of invitation and promise.



Light was not given to destroy men but to save them. It is saving by native tendency and the purpose of God, destructive only by perversion and the folly of men. Wherever it shines, it says, "God hath not appointed you to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." Wherever the "Sun of righteousness" arises, there is "healing in his wings;" drops of mercy and of salvation distil throughout all their broad expansion. Christ "came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." With so much knowledge, with so much opportunity, with so much love, surely, surely, you will not "hate to be reformed and cast his words behind you." He shines upon you; he will, if you shut not out his rays, shine in you. That is salvation. You know what God wills you to be and to do; begin to comply, endeavour to comply. Then shall you indeed be the children of the light. and the children of the day.

## SERMON VI.

## RELIGION NOT UNMANLY.

Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong, therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.—1 KINGS, II. 1—3.

THIS is interesting many ways, interesting as a picture, and as a specimen of counsel. It is an old man speaking to a young one, a king to his successor, an aged warrior to a youthful man of peace, a man of action to a man of knowledge, a dying man to a man on the threshold of his earthly career, one who had done with earth to one who was entering on its fulness, a father to a son, a David to a Solomon. Figure to yourself the scene; it is full of moral grandeur and beauty. David was now "old and stricken in years." There was a time when "he was ruddy and of a fair countenance;" but that had long passed. He was now faded and feeble, the shadow of his former self. Oh! how unlike, the blithe shepherd boy singing to his harp in the green fields of Bethlehem, and the decrepit monarch sighing away his breath in the luxurious palace of Jerusalem. The daughters of music were brought low. The strong men bowed themselves. Such is the end

of man, and for this we are all living, if death do not cut us off too soon. Yet we can hardly doubt that some touches of his former nobleness still clung to the king,—in decay he was yet David,—a shadow, but a shadow that kept still traces of the man that slew Goliath, and whom the virgins of Israel celebrated in their songs. “The gray head is the beauty of old men;” and when this is “found in the way of righteousness,” it is even “a crown of glory,” that needs no apology and no concealment. Would that there were no Christians who were ashamed to feel, and unwilling to acknowledge, that they are growing old. How unworthy this of the disciples of Him, who hath abolished death, and sowed for his followers, in the bosom of the opening tomb the promise of an eternal youth. All that is left of David, the shepherd, the harper, the poet, the warrior, the king, is this hoary-headed and dim-eyed old man, who is saying his last words to the wise and wonderful son, to whom in the very bloom and vigour of his life, he is yielding up the sceptre. It is a picture for the painter, for the philosopher, for the Christian.

But these are not the things on which we purpose to dwell. It is to a single point in these last words of David to his son that we shall confine our attention. David tells Solomon to be a man; and surely no one will doubt that David knew what a man was. He was eminently manly himself. His was a manly character and a manly life. He had grappled with life in its rough, stern reality. Not in bowers and boudoirs, in cloisters or in sumptuous halls, had he chiefly spent his

days, but out among men in battling with adversity and with vicissitude, in fields, in caves, in the conflicts of war, and the grave and difficult offices of government; and he had acquitted himself in them all with a high determination and a vigorous efficiency. When he advised Solomon to show himself a man, he attached no low and feeble sense to the term. David was a judge of manliness.

Yet to his advice to Solomon to be manly he appends a description of character and of a course of action, which therefore was in his estimation manly, or at the least not unmanly. If indeed it is not his description of manliness, it is his testimony as to what is not inconsistent with manliness. "Show thyself a man," he says, "and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses." Now all this is summed up in one word, and that is religion. In the opinion of King David then, religion is not unmanly, religion is manly.

Now to bring this inference distinctly out is what we have been aiming at. It is indeed a very important conclusion. The contrary notion does great mischief in the world, and is one of the chief "wiles of Satan," by which he draws men's feet away from walking in the paths of peace. It is common for men to think, especially young men, the devil delights to make them think, that religion is a womanish business, and cannot be regarded by them seriously without somewhat detracting from that manliness of character in which

they have great glorying. To be independent of restraint and not over squeamish in their morals is to be manly; but to serve God and live as if they had souls is very unmanly. And when the young Solomon is persuaded of this, he is wiser in his own eyes, far wiser, than that truly wise Solomon, who, adopting his father's truer account of manliness, was wont to call the practisers of the other sort of manliness by the rough, plain-spoken title of fools. We think King David is right, and we will proceed to justify our opinion.

Religion then furnishes ample room for manly sentiments and manly courses of action. Nay, it requires them and makes them necessary.

I. It involves the choice of a great object. It sets a man upon living for a great end, the greatest end that he can live for. Now there is no standard by which manliness can be more justly measured than by this, and is so by mankind at large. To see grown up men occupying themselves in petty concerns, suffering them to engross their thoughts and their time and their powers, making them their all, concentrating upon them their energies and their efforts, following them with a zeal, an earnestness and a pertinacity utterly disproportionate and exaggerated, is a pitiable sight, ridiculous if it were not also melancholy. This is puerile, boyish, effeminate. "When I became a man," says the apostle, "I put away childish things." So does every man that is a man, a man not only in stature and in years, but in feeling and character. Otherwise he is but a child, whose spirit is dwarfed

into a perpetual littleness, while its outward case has unnaturally shot ahead of it into manly proportions. The things of a child are very proper things for a child. There is fitness, there is beauty, there is use, in his devotion to them. But how unseemly, how contemptible, how offensive, is such a devotion in a man. We judge of men by the elevation and magnitude of their pursuits. We think a fop a puerile creature, who lives to look pretty and smell sweet. And the man "whose God is his belly," who lives to eat, and lays out his mind on marketing and cookery, is another great child. Such men are still busy with their playthings a little changed in form. But does any man rise to the height of himself who lives for this world? Is there not in all such living the same sort of dwarfing and disparagement of the true greatness and dignity of human nature, the same sad incongruity and disproportion? It seems to me that there is. The unseemliness and disgrace lie in the former case in the disparity between the scope and capacity and the life. Are they less manifest in the latter? The scope of our being is eternity; its capacity, to be equal to the angels and enjoy God forever. Is it manly to cramp such a being within the bounds of the earth and time, and be content with the ephemeral good and greatness which is the best earthly things can give? What is this but keeping on playing with playthings?

Who so much a man as he who shakes away the dust of such mean objects, expands his ideas to the true circumference of his being, takes possession of his

full birthright in his thoughts, and with a worthy firmness of purpose and energy of endeavour, resolves to be fit for the whole magnificent portion and glorious destiny for which his Maker designed him? Who else is so much a man as the Christian? Who so well understands what it is to be a man? Who so honours his manhood? Who so redeems his existence from frivolity, abuse and desecration? Who comes so near to being an image of God on earth, and so well solves the problem, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" Truly, well has Young said,

"A Christian is the highest style of man."

II. There is manliness again in decision, firmness and constancy of purpose. It is characteristic of children that they do not know their own minds, that they are the sport of whim and caprice, unsteady, vacillating, freakish, easily diverted from their aim, easily discouraged by difficulties, deficient in persistency, resolution and concentration. When we see a child more fixed and consistent in the choice of an end than children are wont to be, we call him precocious, a manly child; and if this quality is not so prominent as to be premature and unnatural, we say it augurs well for the boy's future. To see a grown man the victim of fugitive preferences, impressions and impulses, "a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed," is wretched. It shows that he does not look far enough into things to get at their substance, but is the dupe of shifting appearances, which govern him

only while they are present, or for the little time that their fading image lingers after. Of such a man we say that he will never do any thing, and he never does. He may have powers, but they are frittered away and consumed to no purpose in change and indecision. Much meaner faculties steadily directed to one thing, will accomplish far more, and produce a man much worthier of the name. The one will never be more than a gifted, marvellous child; the other a real and honourable man, though he climb to no height of shining eminence. We say then that fixedness, concentration, steadfastness, are attributes of a man, are essential to the development of a truly manly character. And where are they so exhibited, as in religion, if it be genuine and true? What else so tends to form and foster them? What else so draws the whole life as it were to a single focus?—so forces all its streams to run into one reservoir? What else gives life such unity, coherence, and connexion of parts? Who, so as the Christian can say, “This one thing I do;” and, amidst the infinite multiplicity and diversity of human tasks, is always working at one object, realizing that great idea that has taken possession of his mind, making sure that glorious possession of which he has obtained the reversion? He is, if he is what his name fairly imports, eminently a man of resolution, of devotedness, of singleness, of perseverance. My brethren, it is a great thing to see, a sublime thing in a changeful and decaying world, a man bent on a worthy end deliberately and intelligently chosen, devoting to it his life, following it with a firm and unflinching step,



unawed and unseduced, in joy and sorrow, in success and in failure, in youth and age, in life and death. Such a man is the Christian. Read the apostle's account: "By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report, as deceivers, and yet true, as unknown, and yet well known, as dying, and behold! we live." Is not this a manly form of character?

III. There is manliness in independence; and this is emphatically a religious virtue. The Christian must be singular, and pursue a path not trodden by the multitude. And he must be content ordinarily to pursue it in the face of misconception, misconstruction, remonstrance and derision. This is to no small extent "the offence of the cross." "Ye are not of this world." Ye are "a peculiar people." "Narrow is the way; and few there be that find it." To be unlike others, to be looked upon with curiosity, to be thought affected or ostentatious, is trying. So, to keep a separate and isolated position, to be one by one's self, and stand an anomaly and exception, self-centred and self-sustained, without the ordinary props of human opinion and usage, requires largely independence of character. Independence is a quality of manhood. A child is a conformist and a copyist. It leans upon the parent, and holds itself up by clinging to an older person, as the ivy hangs upon the tree or wall. It goes in leading strings, and looks timidly out for examples

and precedents and authorities. To think and act for himself, to mark out his own line of action and pursue it, to have the reasons and the law of his actions in himself, and not to swerve from his path at dictation or censure or contempt, is to vindicate one's maturity, to act the part of a man. And so sensible of this are the young, and so anxious are they to vindicate their claim to this distinction, that they are all too ready to burst the trammels of restraint, throw off the control of outward authority, and walk in unfettered freedom; even though it be, as alas! too often it is, at the expense of obligations which God has stamped with an inviolable sacredness, and in disregard of principles which no man can condemn without turning liberty into licentiousness. But no man on earth is so truly free as the servant of God, who, receiving his directions immediately from God, "calls no man master," but walks among men in a serene majesty, not driven from his course by the breath of applause, the shafts of malice, the tides of fashion, or the surges of change. His is but a childish life who can do nothing without stopping to inquire what this man thinks, and that man says, and another man does, who is now awed by threats, and now seduced by flatteries. He is not yet done with leading strings and toys and rods, though he have the stature of a giant and the front of a bravo. Nothing so emancipates a man out of this condition as religion; for nothing so lifts him up above this world, and enables him to see its true vanity and nothingness. It raises him up into the sense of God's presence and the sunlight of his favour, and infuses

into him the noble equanimity of a soul that rests in peace and walks at liberty, because it keeps God's commandments. There is no manliness like that.

Does not religion then stand vindicated from the charge of unmanliness? And is not David's counsel to Solomon his son justified and sustained—Be manly and be religious, be manly in your religion, and religious in order to be manly? Is not religion successfully rescued from one of the most effective and damaging aspersions that is ever cast upon it—that it is unmanly, that it is a suitable thing for the softer sex, and pretty in children, but not at all fit for robust, hardy, deep-thinking, bold-acting men? It is not in the slightest degree true. If the thought ever visits you, it is a whisper of the devil. If to have the highest and worthiest aim, the aim that most fills out our nature, and most exercises and improves its powers, and to pursue it with an energetic will and an unfaltering independence, be manliness, religion is manliness, manliness by distinction, manliness by emphasis. I say it to all, to men, especially to young men, to those whose glorying is in the thought they are about to pass into the condition of young men—Be not beguiled out of your true dignity and welfare by the false insinuation that sin is manly, that vice is manly, that gayety is manly, that pleasure is manly, that business is manly, that devotion to the world is manly, in fine, that any thing is manly but to fear God and keep his commandments, to rely on Christ and follow his example, to care for the soul and provide for eternity. Oh! look and see what in a few years the false

manliness of the world will come to. See the man, his resources exhausted, his strength brought low, his hope perished, the world proved to him a liar and waters that fail, time irredeemably wasted, eternity a blank except in so far as it is a "looking for of judgment." No, he knows that the things that once seemed so grand to him were but painted shadows, and that he has prostituted his being to the service of trifles not worthy of a man. "Thou hast sown the wind, and thou shalt reap the whirlwind." We have a truer manliness to propose to you, one worthier of your nature and your destination. Be strong, and show yourselves men, and keep the charge of the Lord your God, and walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in his law, and above all in that best and newest law, the Gospel of his Son, that ye may prosper in all that ye do and whithersoever ye turn yourselves in this world, and go up to dwell with God and the angels, and be like them in the world of everlasting life.

## SERMON VII.

## THE FIRST WAYS OF DAVID.

He walked in the first ways of his father David.—2 CHRONICLES,  
XVII. 3.

THESE words contain a pattern and a warning. The pattern is “the first ways of David,” which are praised; and the warning refers to certain other ways of David, which by implication are set in unfavourable contrast with them, and at least by comparison censured. They are spoken of Jehoshaphat, one of David’s descendants and successors on the throne. The historian evidently means to commend him, when he says that he imitated and resembled his illustrious ancestor; and he heightens the eulogy by a limitation. He does not say that he walked in the ways of David generally, but that he walked in his first ways. The merit of the copy is thus advanced at the expense of the pattern. It is not obscurely intimated in this expression that David’s first ways were his best ways; and that there were later ways of his which detracted from his excellence as a model, and rendered him, in a qualified manner and to a limited extent only, an object of God’s approval, and of the admiration and imitation of men.

Now it is peculiarly sad to see that these better ways of David were his first ways, and that the other

ways of his which compare unfavourably with them were the ways of a more advanced period of his life. For this is the reverse of what ought to have been, as it is in contradiction of the true order of the spiritual life. The law of that life is progress, a "going from strength to strength," a "shining more and more unto the perfect day," a "growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." A retrograde motion in it is a violation of its nature and a frustration of its intent. Deterioration in goodness is a disease and an anomaly. Weakness is natural in infants, and waywardness not strange in children; but weak and wayward men are unnatural and repulsive. The Church of Thyatira had for its commendation that its "last" works were "more than the first." So they should always be, more, not only in number, but in greatness and excellence and worth, more pure from alloy and exception, more entirely pervaded and animated with holy and heavenly motives and principles. But so it was not with David. And so, when the annalist of impartial inspiration would commend an honoured descendant of his for his similarity to him, he is obliged to do it with a drawback and an exception which greatly detract from his honour, and to say, that when Jehoshaphat went well, he walked not in all the ways of David, but in his first ways only. And, alas! it is so too often. Too often, are we obliged to exclaim, in view of manifestations that disappoint our hopes, "Ye did run well: who did hinder you?" "Who hath bewitched you?" "I marvel;" "I stand in doubt of you." Quite

enough there is of this sad retroversion in the spiritual world to make us tremble and distrust ourselves; quite enough to give point and emphasis to the apostolic admonitions, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—"Look to yourselves that ye lose not those things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward."

And here, we cannot but notice the candour and impartiality which characterize the accounts of good men in Scripture. Herein, how greatly do these inspired descriptions differ from merely human biographies. The Bible has no human idols. It presents to view no "faultless monsters," free from the infirmity and corruption which cleave to our fallen nature. One only it portrays "without sin," "the man Christ Jesus;" and he "was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." Fault and virtue it sets side by side in all other cases, and with equal distinctness and prominence; the fault without disguise or apology or extenuation, notwithstanding the free and generous praise with which it sums the estimate, not shrinking from narrating the adultery and murder of him, whom yet it scruples not to call "the man after God's own heart." Herein it shows itself divine. It is God dealing with men, and not man with man—a penetrating, discriminating, accurate, thorough, righteous judgment, free alike from flattery and from harshness, that tells the whole with an unfaltering sincerity, putting down naught in malice, concealing naught from favour, and speaking forth the conclusion in a clear, authoritative tone of solemn certainty and con-

scious power. The Bible, in its way of dealing with the lives and characters of men almost as much as in any thing, bespeaks itself the voice of God. Men are afraid to tell the misdeeds of their heroes and saints, lest the cause should suffer, and the meed of praise they seek for them be lost or marred. But God describes good men to us as they are, good but partially, good in certain measures and respects, good not in that their goodness is perfect, but good in spite of various defects and blemishes; our models, but as much admonitions; in their broken and interrupted course of godly living yet approved of God, encouragements of those, who, while they would live godly, feel the workings of sin in their members, and warnings to be ever watching and guarding against the sins that most easily beset us, and the temptations that encompass our paths.

It is further worthy of notice, that the unfavourable change in David's spiritual course, which now engages our attention, was connected with an equally marked change in his outward condition. The first and best ways of David were the ways of David the shepherd; the later and worse ways of David were the ways of David the king. The change from an obscure to a public situation, from adverse circumstances to prosperity, is a great moral trial, through which few pass entirely unharmed. That must be a robust and vigorous goodness indeed, which can undergo such a transition without injury. Men that are seeking great things for themselves in this world, are putting their spiritual interests to fearful hazard. Spiritual loss



is loss for eternity, and is poorly compensated by any measure of temporal gain or advancement. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" or even do but defraud his soul of some portion of its heavenly birthright? That is bad thrift, that, for any earthly advantage, chooses a condition less favourable to the great business of working out our salvation. The earlier period of David's life was first lowly and then afflicted. Then his ways pleased the Lord; then they were good ways, deserving of almost unqualified commendation; then his character shone in the lustre of virtue and holiness, and secured for him the favour of God and the sympathy of good men. But by and by he sat upon a throne. The lustre of earthly greatness surrounded him. Wealth, power, splendour, luxury adorned his condition. But, alas! the lustre of his goodness grew dim. Grievous sin marred his life. And though he repented and was forgiven, and followed the Lord ever after, it is quite evident that the stain was never wholly wiped from his conscience, that his spiritual strength and peace were sadly impaired, that the beauty of his example was soiled and clouded, and the shadow of God's displeasure darkened the remnant of his days. It was the prosperity of David that proved a snare to him. A life of ease and indulgence relaxed the tone of his religion. He forgot to watch and pray. He grew less sensible of his weakness and dependence. Temptation found him off his guard. He fell, and the blot of so great a fall, not all the tears he shed, nor all the calamities that befell him, nor all his efforts to

retrieve his fault, nor all his meek submission under the chastisement of God, could wipe from the inspired record, or erase from his reputation and his memory. David a shepherd, David a fugitive, turned to be David a king, might be to unthinking men an object of congratulation and envy. But wiser judges will not be slow to conclude, that David, when he sang his sweet pastoral psalm in the fields of Bethlehem, and looked up to God with calm submission and confidence as he fled before the persecutions of Saul, is the David to be loved and admired, and honoured, and envied, and imitated; and not David reclining with lascivious glances on the roof of his palace at eventide, issuing forth iniquitous orders to Joab, smiling with deceitful friendship on the faithful and heroic Uriah, and followed to the end of a long life of kingly splendour and success, with memorials of his folly, the rebuke of his God, the reproaches of his conscience, and the blasphemings on his account of the enemies of God.

There are indeed few more lovely moral pictures than that which the Scriptures present of those first ways of David, which the text commends. We see him emerging from the retirement of the country in early youth into the trying scenes of the camp and the court, the shepherd boy suddenly transformed into the champion and the hero, the king's minstrel, his armour-bearer, his general and his son-in-law, praised and courted, the object of general notice and applause. But he bears himself in his new position with singular modesty, propriety and integrity, a dutiful subject, a faithful friend, a devout and conscien-

tious worshipper of God. Soon he is designated to the throne, and thereupon he becomes an object of the king's jealousy and suspicion; regard turns to hatred, and favour to persecution. He is driven from the court, and wanders a fugitive in his own country, and at last, a voluntary exile beyond its borders. Under this new form of trial he continues as before to behave himself wisely and conscientiously, and shine in the furnace of affliction even more than under the radiance of prosperity. He had borne elevation well. It had done him no harm to be turned from a shepherd into a prince and the expectant of a throne. He bears depression equally well. He sinks into a vagabond and the captain of a band of outlaws, and is in these dangerous and questionable conditions, not a whit less noble, pure, upright and faithful, than he was in his country home and at the court. The court of Saul and the fastnesses of the Dead Sea alike witness his fervent prayers and devout psalms of praise. Nothing shakes his confidence in God, or betrays him into unworthy courses of action. He holds fast his integrity, worships Jehovah alone in the midst of pagans, never doubts his faithfulness when appearances are most unfavourable, never resorts to questionable means to attain the throne which God had promised him, or fails in loyalty and respect to its occupant, though he was abandoned of God and turned into a bitter enemy. He loves Jonathan with a tenderness and a magnanimity and a constancy most remarkable, and mourns his fall with undissembled sorrow, though his death was the removal of the chief impediment to his exaltation.

He was a man of faith, of prayer, of fidelity, of virtue, affectionate, generous, long-suffering, unselfish, patient, firm. He was not faultless even then. Inspiration faithfully records the errors and weaknesses of even these his first and better ways. If they had not been recorded, we might well have doubted the truthfulness of the portrait; for he was human, and "there is no man that liveth and sinneth not." But the picture is certainly one of rare beauty, and the moral perceptions of that heart must be dull indeed that does not recognise and own the loveliness.

But when David was at last seated upon the throne of Israel in magnificence and luxury and ease, he fell into that grievous sin which so deforms his history, and casts so deep and mournful a shadow over the later portion of his life. He was a penitent all the rest of his days. The frown of God followed him, though his sin was forgiven. And the one broad and fearful chasm which breaks the continuity of his godly course, mars his memory among men, and leaves him after all to the Church in after times more a monition than a model. God would teach us, it might seem, by him, not to be "high-minded, but fear;" never to feel that we are secure from falling even into gross transgressions; that no length of service or eminence of virtue is a certain protection against temptation; above all, to distrust ourselves in the hour of enjoyment and fulness; and to be sure, that while "there is mercy with him that he may be feared," he is severe upon the transgressions of his servants, and

will save only as by fire those who swerve from their integrity in his service.

See here then the danger of prosperity. David had passed through one period of prosperity unhurt. A country lad was suddenly transformed into an object of popular adulation and kingly patronage, a champion, a hero, a victor, a deliverer, put in possession of much, and encouraged to hope for more. David bore that trial well. We do not see that under it in any respect he behaved himself unseemly. But then there were circumstances about it well fitted to neutralize its dangers. It was short, precarious, uncertain, and attended with annoyances and perils. Saul's jealousy sprang up almost at its beginning; and he was soon made to feel how unsafe and thorny is the eminence that hangs on prince's favours, and admonished by the quickly waning love and growing hostility of his royal patron, to put not his trust in princes, nor in any child of man. But the prosperity that waited on his royal state was of another and a far more perilous description. His enemies had all vanished. His throne seemed firmly established in the promise of God and the favour of men. His cup ran over. He had more than heart could wish. All this goodness wore an appearance of security and stability. He was tempted to say, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, eat, drink, and be merry." His heart was lifted up. He forgot God. He grew arrogant, selfish and sensual. Temptation overtook him, and he fell, grievously, shamefully, heinously. Ah! little do we think

what we are doing, when we are fretting to be delivered from our wants and vexations, longing for ease, fulness, security, to be free from annoyance and deprivation and anxiety. We are asking for that which is not good but baneful, to be placed in a situation hazardous to our spiritual welfare, and full of the seeds of worse and more enduring evils than any that now oppress us. Far better is it for us to rejoice that we are under the wise regimen of One who prefers our profiting before our pleasure, to submit ourselves with cheerfulness and patience to his fatherly correction, and only pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Again we see, that men are not to be our patterns, but only "the Man Christ Jesus." The saints of Scripture, it is instructive to see, are all imperfect and blemished specimens of sanctity. We can follow them only in parts and phases and passages. With much to admire and rejoice in we see much to condemn and regret. It is encouraging to us under our own oppressive and painful sense of infirmity, to see that those whom God most commends and honours were such as we. We too may hope for acceptance and reward in all our imperfection at the same gracious hands. It may often keep our hearts from sinking and our hope from dying out, to look at the case of those who have gone before us in serving God. But we must be careful not to abuse this consolation. Sanctity does not sanctify the sins of good men. Evil is not the less evil because good men do it. Scripture deals, we see, impartially with its favourites. It

has no varnish to conceal the transgressions of those whom it praises. It calls their sins sins, and it condemns them as distinctly and as severely as it does those of the vilest offenders, and it points out without reserve their mischief to them and to others. We are not to think the more favourably of adultery and murder because David was guilty of them; or to take shelter under the example of good and great names to excuse our faults; or think ourselves safe in going on in wicked ways because those whom God praises fell into grievous offences. This is to pervert and not to profit by Scripture. One Man alone we can look up to with unqualified admiration, and follow with unhesitating steps, Christ Jesus, "made of a woman, made under the law." He is the pattern man; He left us an example that we should follow his steps; He did no sin; and wherever we can see his footsteps, we shall be safe to walk, assured that they and they only mark with undeviating steadiness and certainty the narrow way that leadeth unto life.

Finally, let us always be looking out for the symptoms and beginnings of spiritual decline. Never are we so safe as when we feel unsafe. "Happy is the man that feareth always." They that "feed themselves without fear" are sure to fall into mischief. And what room is there among men for a feeling of security? Surely none. Is there any eminence of goodness, from which men have not fallen into grievous transgression? any length of continuance in God's service which will secure us from swerving from it? any safe endurance of trials which will assure us that

some trial may not yet be too great for us? Ah, brethren! there is no security like that of always feeling ourselves insecure, always remembering that we are in an enemy's country beset by implacable and treacherous foes, always feeling that our nature is weak, inclined to err, open to assaults, ready to concur with temptation, imperfectly sanctified, and dependent continually on new supplies of grace. Oh! then, let us beware of falling back in our Christian course, and of so blemishing our Christian calling that our first ways shall be our best ways. Let us "watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation." Let us distrust ourselves and lean only upon God.



## SERMON VIII.

## THE WORK AND WARFARE OF LIFE.

They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded.—NEHEMIAH IV. 17, 18.

LIFE is work, and life is warfare; and these are ever commingled; so that when we work we must fight, and when we fight we must work. Thus our earthly being is always a scene of mingled toil and battle, labour and conflict; and the case of those Jews, as the text describes it, who wrought in restoring Jerusalem when "the streets were built again, and the wall, even in troublous times," is not at all singular, is indeed but an epitome and a sample of that larger and longer work which fills the broad area of all human history. "There remaineth a rest for the people of God;" but that rest is not here, save as they which do believe do enter into rest, inward rest, that repose and tranquillity of spirit through reconciliation to God and submission to his will, which is a foretaste of "the glory that shall be revealed." Now, we can only toil, and seek by strenuous and perpetual endeavour to fulfil the duty to which we were sworn at our baptism, and "continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our life's end."

This life then is to men but a scene of toil. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," is a decree which has suffered no repeal or relaxation, which, indeed, is irrevocable, and must last as long as time. It is the universal and unchanging law of human life. We are born under it; under it we live; and when we die, we leave it an inheritance to our children. I speak of work, not as it stands in opposition to inaction, but as it is distinguished from play. Inaction is no blessing. The spirit of man stagnates and sickens under it, and it issues in a weariness which is worse than the fatigue of labour. Activity is needful to the true enjoyment of life. Adam was not inactive in paradise: God put him into the garden of Eden "to dress it and to keep it." There is an activity that is pleasurable and contains its own reward. But this, as I have hinted above, is play. Herein then lies the difference between play and work,—the one is directly pleasurable, the other is not; the one men seek on its own account, the other on account of what it promises; the one contains, or rather is, its own requital, the other has its recompense in fruits which are more or less uncertain and remote. The former is life's pastime or recreation, with which the toiler finds refreshment and relief in the pauses and intervals of his labour. A very small part of life's pleasure is found in idleness, that is, in an entire cessation of activity and complete repose of the powers. Indeed this is never directly and positively pleasurable, but only as it involves a sense of release and a feeling of contrast; and if prolonged, it soon grows insufferable, and is a

far worse condition than that of which it has taken the place. Heaven is a rest, but not a rest of indolence. There "his servants do serve him." And his angels are "his servants that do his pleasure." Exercise and exertion are not evils intrinsically. The evil that cleaves to them lies in their direction, and in the effects that are attendant upon them. Life, however, is not the scene of recreation and pastime, a playground and pleasure-house for man, in which he is left only to such activity as he craves for the satisfaction that is in it, and delightful employment comes only to add zest to delicious repose. Life is full of another kind of activity, of an activity that is irksome and painful, that at the best yields no pleasure, and oftentimes is disagreeable, or even distressing. This is work. It consists in an exertion of the faculties of body or of mind for a good which is future, which is not in the exertion itself or immediately consequent upon it, but removed from it by an interval more or less prolonged, an interval moreover that contains in it opportunity of failure, defeat and disappointment. Of this life is full. This forms the staple of its business. This is bound upon it by a law irrevocable and inexorable, which no strength can resist, which no art can evade. If any man will not work, neither shall he eat, is a true saying, whether taken literally or in figure.

The greater part of human life is occupied in labours which bring with them no agreeable sensations, nor immediate and sure recompense, the good results of which lie off in the impenetrable and dubious future, a future veiled from sight, and overhung with sha-

dows, a future that is under the absolute control, not of the worker himself, but of One, who, not in caprice but in wisdom, has determined that the race shall not always be to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill—who has involved the issues of human labour in hopeless doubt and obscurity. We toil for a contingent good, so far at least as it is earthly, and, to no small extent, even as it is heavenly, contingent not on any doubtful promise or doubtful fidelity of the great Rewarder, but on our working rightly, and our working perseveringly, amid misleading influences, and with a weak flesh in a seductive world. Truly, then, we work blindly and in darkness. Much of our work yields no present or speedy returns. “We walk by faith and not by sight.” The invisible and the distant and the uncertain is that which claims our endeavours. We only know that we can have nothing without them; and yet we do not know that we shall have what we seek with them. We are tempted to discontinue them; but that would only be to render past efforts vain, and forfeit the possible fruit of them, yet unrealized and undiscovered, that may be hidden somewhere in futurity. So we are driven to labour still, that we may not lose past labour; and whenever we begin to slacken our exertions, hear in our ears the monitory words, “Look to yourselves that ye lose not those things that ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward.” Such labour involves self-denial, apprehension, patience, fatigue, disappointment. This is work.

And this work is manifold. There is work for the mind and work for the hand, work that calls into action all the faculties of the soul and all the organs of the body. Few and short are the intervals that can be given to repose or recreation by him who aims to do it faithfully. The life of man is always under a pressure. Every moment has its call, and he who does not heed it gives up to waste that which no subsequent diligence can retrieve, that which might have added honour and felicity to his earthly existence, and earned gems for his eternal crown, that for which God, who gives him time, and power to employ it usefully, will call him into judgment in the last day. Who is there that can ever say there is nothing which he ought to be doing? An idler's reckoning, though it embrace few charges of positive transgression, must answer for a life which is all one great contravention of the will of Him who sent him into the world to work, to be a productive source of good to himself and to others, and to glorify the Giver of all that he has by preparing to render to him his own with usury. It was the condemnation of the servant in the parable, not that he had wasted his lord's money, not that he had employed it to any unlawful or injurious purpose, but that he had hidden it, that he had done nothing with it, that he had suffered it to lie idle, and had not prepared by use to render it back with increase.

I said, the work of life is manifold. "All things are full of labour; a man cannot utter it." Every man has a work that is specific and peculiar to him. In all the crowd of workers there is not one that has a task

assigned him that is the exact counterpart of any other. In all the list of assignments there are no duplicates. The great Taskmaster never set two of his creatures the same task. Amid much general sameness, there is the strictest individuality.

What an immense amount of activity is expended in acquiring the means of subsistence! "All the labour of man is for his mouth." "The king himself is served by the field." We are all working on our mother earth in person or by our deputies. For every other kind of labour were vain, if this should cease. This world since the fall is a sterile and refractory place, and yields up the good that is in it only in reward of arduous and difficult efforts. And if any are exempt from the direct office of husbandry, it is only that they may employ themselves in producing somewhat else, which may be given in exchange for its products. And if any have attained to any sort of approximation to what too many account the honour of doing nothing, it is only that they may do Satan's work more diligently and effectively: they are debased, and in spite of themselves, unhappy. How great is the number of human avocations! And in each one of these avocations what a number of workers! And each one has a task given him to do which is as distinct as himself, which no one can do but he, which his circumstances, his relations, his endowments define, and which, in this great scene of various and incessant activity, stands as much by itself as though it were alone. There is mental as well as bodily activity, the toil of men whose business lies chiefly in thinking.

in intellectual action, a form of action not the less laborious and exhausting and wearisome, because its results are not tangible and material. Minds and hearts are at work everywhere, noiselessly, each in its own hidden receptacle and sanctuary—a busy scene, into which the eyes of men do not penetrate but on which the eye of the Lord is open continually, where lie nevertheless the spring and wheels that put and keep in motion that grand and vast machinery which fills and animates the busy, restless arena of outward human life. Need I say more to you to satisfy you that life is work? For all these beings are not thus active because it pleases them so to be, or because they have delight in what they do; but because they have a task set them, and there is One over them that takes care that they shall labour in it, and binds them to it with a necessity whose iron chain they can neither break nor escape, that Taskmaster, whose slaves they are if they have not learned to do his will from their hearts, “whose service is perfect freedom” to such as “look into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein.”

And this thought supplies us with a happy transition to another view of life's work, far more solemn and important, without which we should do little justice to it or to you. I refer to its spiritual department, that work of the soul and of eternity, which envelops and permeates all human activity, which dignifies and consecrates it all, which is alone worth the notice and endeavours of an immortal creature, in which alone is fulfilled the great end of his being—“to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” This higher

end contains and pervades all lower ends, and, regarded in a religious spirit, turns things most secular in themselves into a sacred intent and nature. This spiritual work has that which is peculiar to itself, and that which is coincident with other forms of action; and when this latter is taken up into the former, and filled with its sanctifying influence, it becomes sacred also; and thus the whole life is serving God, and working out the salvation of the soul. It is an ill and unsound view of religion to regard it as confined to a few inward feelings and peculiar outward performances. Rightly viewed, it is all-pervading, all-embracing. Acts directed immediately to secular ends, if they be also referred to spiritual considerations, grow spiritual; and God may thus be as truly served in our workshops and our parlours as in our churches and closets, in our business as in our worship. He will be, if he is truly served at all. The peculiar work of religion lies in the inward exercise of faith and repentance, in devout and pious affections, in holy purposes, and in all that pertains to the inward discipline of a godly life; its outward part in the observances which pertain to the Church, either in obedience to the express command of her Lord, or in the exercise of her own wise and maternal discretion. But it extends to the whole work of life, only requiring that we should "do it heartily as to the Lord and not to men," that "whether we eat or drink or whatever we do we should do all to the glory of God," to make it all religious, and "an offering acceptable, well pleasing to God through Jesus Christ." This business of



seeking immortal good, and training the soul for heavenly glory, is called in Scripture a work. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." And truly it is a work, a work that calls for ardour and earnestness and resolution and patience, for self-denial and effort, and strenuous and persevering endeavour.

But it is quite time that we should advert to that which forms the peculiarity of this work, namely, that it is a fight also—that the work of life is the battle of life, and the true worker a soldier. For we are not to run its course over an open field, but over a field barred by obstructions, and infested with enemies. And as these, in their passive resistance or active opposition, are everywhere to be encountered, they render our whole life a warfare. And thus, as did the Jews, who wrought in building the walls of Jerusalem, "from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared," so must we, if we would labour well, and finish the work that is given us to do, with one hand toil in the work, and with the other hand hold a weapon. Thus every Christian is a soldier as well as a worker. To this double office he is sworn at the font. And there, the delicate infant in the pastor's arms, not in mockery, nor by a pretty figure of speech, but in solemn earnestness, and serious meaning, and dread reality, is endued with helmet and sword and shield, not only bound to

Christ's service, but enlisted under Christ's banner, to "fight manfully," as well as work patiently, and "continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end." And whosoever, in fulfilment of that oath, seeks to apply himself in earnest to the duties of his high vocation, soon finds that he is summoned to no mock fight or holiday parade, but to a real conflict, arduous, perilous and exhausting. So Scripture represents us. We are to "take to ourselves the whole armour of God," "to fight the good fight," "to fight the good fight of faith," that we may be "more than conquerors," and "lay hold on eternal life;" and the crown is to be given at last "to him that overcometh." The whole representation of the Christian life in the Scriptures exhibits it as undertaken and prosecuted in the face of difficulty and opposition, incessant, formidable and manifold.

We have to fight against ourselves. This is that great enemy, which is known under the name of the flesh. We bring to the task of working out our salvation, alas! but divided energies. We are but partly engaged in an undertaking, that is great and arduous enough to employ the united powers of the whole man. There is ever a part of us that is hanging back, and we must turn our arms against our own refractory and reluctant powers, before we can bring them to aid us in our combat with outward foes. Well may we pray, "Unite my heart to fear thy name." We have to overcome our sluggishness, our unbelief, our sensuality, our concupiscence, the heavy clog of sense, and the fierce impulse of corruption. And when we

have overcome them, we must renew the strife, and conquer them again. For these inward enemies are never slain, but are ever rising fresh from their defeats, and making ready anew to battle. Thus "the law of the members wars against the law of the mind." And as internal wars are ever fiercest and most painful, so the battle ground of the Christian's own heart is that on which he is called to wage the severest fight and win the hardest victory.

We have a fight against men. This enemy is called the world. And by it we mean that vast mass of maxims, opinions, beliefs, pursuits, ways, habits, opposed to the mind and service of God, which characterize human society. "Whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God." Against all these, the Christian, if he is to do his duty, is to set himself in an attitude both of resistance and aggression. The influence of these things is ever reaching him through all his senses, and plying him with numberless and specious arts, to corrupt his principles, and divert him from his course. These are what St. Paul calls "fiery darts," against which "the shield of faith" is alone availing. It is a world of temptation; and if we would not be "tempted above that we are able," we must be ever standing on our guard and watching unto prayer. We are, moreover, to contend against this world, to rebuke it, to unfurl the banner of our Master openly in its face, to set up in the midst of it opposite principles, persuasions, doctrines, objects, purposes and courses, and not only to profess but to love them, and at whatever expense of

hatred, derision or persecution ; and, if need be, contend unto blood and unto death striving against sin.

We have a fight against spirits. The name of this enemy is the devil and his angels, numerous, powerful and malignant. Their name is legion ; for they are many. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood" alone, mere human wickedness and malignity, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"—spiritual natures, fallen from their first estate and enlisted in the cause of evil, of high original dignity, and still of mighty strength. "Our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." Him we are to "resist, steadfast in the faith." This species of enmity is all the more terrific because it is invisible, because it does not address itself to our senses, and is indicated by no outward manifestations, and they who walk by sight alone, discredit it altogether as unreal and visionary, and ridicule our fears of it as groundless and superstitious. Its vagueness and uncertainty, and the limited extent of our acquaintance with its modes of approach and operation, may well serve to augment our apprehension, and deepen our solicitude. "The prince of the power of the air," coming to us we know not how nor when, we should ever be watching against, ready to engage. He walks with us as often in life's flowery paths, as in its darker and more forbidding ways.

Life then is all work, for we have ever something to do, to fulfil its end and secure its reward, something

not pleasurable in itself nor immediately profitable; and this work is all warfare, for it has to be done in the face of opposition inward and outward, with manful resolution and determined energy, in strenuous battle with ourselves and men and spirits, with the world, the flesh and the devil. With one hand we must labour in the work of our calling, and with the other wield the weapons of our warfare.

My dear brethren, shall we shrink then? Shall we be listless, and faint-hearted and indolent? Look at the men of the world. How ardent, how steadfast, how energetic, how persevering, they are! Shall we be less so? "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown; we an incorruptible." Soon this scene of conflict will fade from our eyes. Soon our toil will end in rest, our fight in victory. That rest is glorious, that victory eternal and complete. Jesus, "the Captain of our salvation," hath laboured and fought, and "set down on the right hand of God." And now to our weary and fainting heart he speaks from that seat of glory in tones of majesty and tenderness—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I have overcome, and am set down with my Father on his throne." Who will decline the work? Who will despair of the victory?

## SERMON IX.

## THE WORD AND THE DREAM.

The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream, and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?—JEREMIAH XXIII. 28, 29.

THE prophet here exhibits in contrast divine teaching and the speculations of men. The former he calls the word of the Lord. The latter he calls but dreams, the visionary offspring of the human mind, and partaking of the weakness and fallibility of the source whence they spring. "The things of God knoweth no man," save as he is "taught of God;" and therefore, the moment we leave the ground of revelation in our teaching, we lose all claim to implicit confidence and respect; all is inference, surmise and theory, partakes of the feebleness of reason and the wildness of fancy, should be uttered with modesty and self-distrust, and received with caution and reserve. Yet such speculation is not utterly unlawful or pernicious. "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream." Human minds must think. They will clothe truth in forms and guises of their own. They will classify, arrange, systematize. It helps memory and clearness of conception. Yet all such speculation needs to be under the restraint of a godly fear, of a solemn sense of responsibility, to be sober, guided by a constant re-

ference to Holy Scripture, carefully restrained from wandering into the dangerous regions of mere invention, and guarded against the spirit of dogmatism and dictation. The prophet very beautifully and aptly likens divine truth and human thoughts about it to the wheat and chaff. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" comparatively, nothing. And yet the chaff is not without an humble species and degree of utility. To the growing wheat it answers the purpose of ornament, protection and conservation. Separated from the ripened grain it is indeed worthless. In the grain alone, is nutrition and abiding value. Let then, human thinking always be kept in that subordinate place which alone befits it. The moment the dream of man and the oracle of God are put on a footing of equality, and the distinction that separates them is forgotten, mischief ensues; the teacher promulgates error, his teaching degenerates into "vain babbling;" and "the lips that should keep knowledge," "cause the people" that seek at them the law of the Lord "to err through their lies and their lightness." "The prophet that hath a dream let him tell a dream," and tell it as a dream, as a shape in which divine truth has clothed itself in his own mind by the processes of reflection and meditation, or which has been put upon it by the consenting judgment of conscientious, learned and judicious men, but not as certainly that very truth of God which lies hidden in the letter of the Sacred Word. In that pure word alone divine energy and efficiency reside. That is the fire whose searching heat few things can abide unchanged, the hammer

that breaketh the rock in pieces, that alone can effectually subdue the hardness of the human heart, and conquer the stubbornness of the human will.

Scriptural truth, then, in opposition to any speculations of man, is here represented as the instrument of the teacher's saving work, the appointed nutriment of the soul, and the powerful means of softening and subduing our refractory nature.

But what is Scriptural truth? And how is it to be ascertained and distinguished? It is evident from the text that it has a rival, which seeks to usurp its office and its honours, to be received as its equivalent, instead of it or along with it as an effective teacher of men in the will of God and the way of salvation; while yet such speculation is, we have seen, inevitable, and not to be wholly and indiscriminately condemned.

One step in the process of obtaining Scriptural truth from Scripture is interpretation. Scriptural truth is not the letter of the word, but its meaning, the mind of God conveyed to men under its various forms and delineations. The mind of God contained in Scripture, ascertained, extricated and stated, is Scriptural truth. Truth lies in the Scriptures as the ore lies in the mine, mingled with foreign substances, disguised by various combinations. Not till it is elicited, disengaged and presented in its simple, unmixed condition, is it moral and spiritual truth, an infallible lesson of doctrine and duty to men. Let me illustrate. The truth in a divine history, is the information it affords concerning the mind of God in reference to human conduct—the



doctrine it exemplifies and illustrates. The truth in a parable, is its moral, the lesson it conveys, the belief or practice it is intended to inculcate. A message from God designed for a particular case or occasion, has its permanent value in the general and abiding principle which it implies and intimates. That principle is its contribution to the sum of scriptural truth. God acts not by caprice, but by immutable rules. By scanning his acts in particular instances we discover these rules and learn to apply them, we see what courses and dispositions will ordinarily secure his approbation, what will ordinarily incur his displeasure. Of such materials Scripture is made up. The process of interpretation is needed to free the truth it contains from its various confinements and disguises.

Another step in the process of obtaining scriptural truth from Scripture is to systematize, arrange and combine the results of interpretation. Truth comes from the mine in fragments. It is gathered here a little and there a little. In order to be a consistent whole, it must be reduced to a system, the various fragments must be melted into a uniform and symmetrical mass. The truth is a congeries of truths, not heaped irregularly and promiscuously together, but disposed in an orderly and harmonious arrangement. Truth must be adjusted to truth, so that they may be parts of a coherent whole, and not a confused aggregation of unrelated particles. Truth is a unit by a law, and not by accident, a crystallization and not a fortuitous assemblage. The announcement of a particular Scripture is not independent of all other announce-

ments but related to them all, is not perfect in itself, but a part of a perfection, and is not exactly known, except as it is seen in the light of the whole testimony of concurrent teaching. One truth limits and modifies another. A separate truth viewed without reference to other truths grows immediately disproportionate and corrupt. Hence the necessity of "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," "prophesying according to the proportion," that is, the analogy, "of the faith," "rightly dividing the word of truth."

Let us next attend to the action of the human mind on the truth thus ascertained. The mind will not receive truth passively. It will be active upon it. It will think. It will speculate. For instance, it is taught redemption, viz., that by the suffering and death of Christ, man is relieved from the wrath of God and the punishment legally due to transgressors on condition of becoming penitent and believing. This is divine teaching, the ascertained sense of Scripture, and as such the mind receives it. But the mind will not rest there. It will raise the question, how the death of Christ effects the forgiveness of sin, how it operates to make it safe and proper and right for God to pardon repentant and confiding sinners. It will have theories of redemption, and it may have different theories innocently, provided it leaves the truth in its integrity; and any man may tell his theory, his dream, if he do but tell it as a theory, and not put it on a level with the truth which it attempts to explain. The doctrine of the Trinity is a theory. It is not summarily and explicitly taught in Scripture, but it is a logical deduction from things

that are taught in it. That there is one God, that the Father is personally distinct from the Son and the Holy Ghost, that the Son is divine, and the Spirit a divine person, are separate propositions which are plainly and unequivocally taught. And if any man will receive these particular statements, but is afraid of the name, or the general formula, we must not call him a heretic, but only a clumsy reasoner. So about grace, its action on the soul of man, its adaptation to our own voluntary agency, we speculate, and we speculate safely, so long as we do not deny, on the one hand, that man is free to choose good or evil, and, on the other, that it is God that worketh in him to will and to do of his good pleasure; for these things are taught in Scripture.

There are Scripture hints, again, which we cannot refrain from attempting to expand and fill out, to give them form and fulness by conjectures and suppositions of our own; as, for instance, a spiritual state of being and a future life we seek to clothe with substance and reality by imagining what they are, what are the conditions of such states of existence, what are their sources of enjoyment, what their modes and occasions of action; and we seize upon analogies and symptoms, if we can find any, to help our conceptions. So to deduce truth from Scripture, harmonize it, and fill it out is human, but it is needful, salutary, legitimate,—there can be no clear thinking, no effective teaching, without it. But the teacher must always be careful to distinguish between the explicit announcements of God's word, which are infallible because di-

vine, and those thoughts of man about them, which are valuable only in proportion to the soundness of the argument and evidence by which they are sustained. "The prophet that hath a dream let him tell a dream, and he that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully." But when speculation leaves these bounds, and presumes to act independently of divine teaching, to originate doctrines unknown to the Bible, in accordance with its own philosophies, schemes of human nature, or notions of moral truth, and in order to sustain them disparages Scripture, or wrests it from that sense which it naturally bears and the common judgment of the Church has fixed upon it, to support some foregone opinion—when the object is not honestly to seek the meaning of Scripture and build on that alone a system of belief and practice, but to force doctrines, derived from a totally foreign source upon the Scriptures, in order to gain for them the credit of a venerable name, and clothe them with the sanctity of an apparent respect for Christianity, such dreaming is utterly unlawful and pernicious, "the blind do but lead the blind," and "both shall fall into the ditch." "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them."

But there is a question lower down than all we have yet said—How shall we extract Scriptural truth from Scripture,—how shall we derive the meaning from the letter of the Word? Attention to these rules will, it is believed, seldom fail to secure success.

1st. The natural and apparent meaning is ordinarily the true one. We are not to be seeking recondite

meanings in the Word of God. To do so is to forget its design. The Bible is God teaching men by human speech. To do this effectually it conforms to the laws of human speech. It speaks intelligibly. It employs the terms and forms of language in their ordinary acceptance. It is the book of men at large, and not of a learned class, of scholars and men of peculiar penetration and reach of thought. It is popular teaching clothed in popular phraseology, and not in the technical language of scientific theology. When our Saviour was upon earth, "the common people heard him gladly;" and still they may hear him gladly speaking to them in his word, without fear of his "darkening counsel:" by any intentional obscurity or ambiguity of speech. There are few more useful or safer rules for coming at the meaning of Scripture than this simple one,—The Bible means what it seems to mean.

2d. That meaning of any particular passage of Scripture is the true one, which harmonizes with the general strain of its teaching. We are not to build doctrines on isolated texts, if there are other texts, which, fairly considered, operate to modify and limit their sense. We cannot know the meaning of any Scripture without a general acquaintance with Scripture. It is common justice to suppose an author consistent with himself. God is the Author of the Bible, however many and various the human instruments he has employed in its composition. God must be consistent with himself. What he says in one place cannot contradict what he says in another. And the true sense in either must be that which gives a con-

sistent sense in both. Take an example. St. Paul calls our Saviour, "the Man Christ Jesus." If this were all, we might understand him as asserting Jesus Christ to be mere man. But in view of what is said elsewhere, we know that he simply affirms Jesus Christ to be human, a true man, and to possess by voluntary assumption a humanity that is real, actual and complete. It is the doctrine of the incarnation.

3d. The ancient meaning is to be preferred to any that is more modern. In other words, Scripture is to be interpreted in accordance with "that form of doctrine which was delivered" to the Church at the beginning, "the faith once delivered to the saints." We are to "hold fast the form of sound words," in which the doctrines of the Gospel were embodied by those "who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word." Truth, like its Author, is "the same yesterday and to-day and forever;" "as it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be, world without end." There are no such things as discoveries in Christianity. It is not an improvable system. It has no such thing as growth. Development is the refuge of the Romanist, who would sanctify the accumulated rubbish of ages of darkness, or of the rationalist, who seeks liberty to mould Christianity into a conformity with his wishes. Christianity came from the hands of its Author perfect and unalterable. No doctrine that was unknown in early ages is any part of it. We are to remember that the Gospel was taught before it was written, that a definite system of belief and practice was established before the Christian

Scriptures were composed. And the Scriptures do but echo and republish this, and with this system in our minds, handed down from the beginning in the Church, we are to read them. The meanings that conform to it we are to embrace, the meanings that contradict it we are to reject. Neglect of this rule has been the fruitful source of heresies, the evil root whence have sprung the innumerable errors which infest, deform and agitate the family of Christ. A return to it will be the signal of unity and reconciliation.

Finally, the text ascribes to Scriptural truth, and to that alone, a divine energy and efficiency in the work of teaching. The wheat—it nourishes souls; the fire—it softens human obduracy; the hammer—it breaks down and subdues human opposition. Philosophical theories, moral schemes, flights of eloquence, beauties of style, “play round the head, but come not near the heart.” Truth sanctifies men, truth makes men free. “The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” The truths of the Gospel are these weapons, presented in their simplicity, integrity and proportion. These make men new creatures; these “turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just;” these “give subtilty to the simple,” and make the ignorant “wise unto salvation.” Whence this efficacy? this superiority to all other teaching? Simply here—they are divine—God uses them—God will use nothing else.

No instrument in man's hands is competent to save men. "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." We work successfully only when God works with us and by us. And this he does only when we conscientiously adhere to our instructions, and confine ourselves to the instruments which he has put into our hands. To this his grace is pledged, to this his promises are given. With such aid "the feeble shall be as David," and "the foolish things of the world confound the wise." For thus saith the Lord: "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

You are then, my dear brethren, to expect no novelties from us. Our commission is definite and confined within narrow limits. "We dare not go beyond the word of the Lord to do less or more of our own mind." Our business is simply to speak the word of God faithfully. Here only have we a divine warranty. Here only have we prospect of success. To souls that have long refused to be fed with it, we have only still to hold forth the bread of life. To soften the hard heart, we can but rekindle the fire that has burnt in vain. To subdue the stubborn will, we can but let fall the hammer that has not broken it as yet. We dare not try any new doctrine, or experiment on any



new species of teaching. We are tied up to this one work of "speaking the same things unto you," because "to you it is safe," and nothing else is safe. We might tell our dreams to you, novelties of our own invention, airy notions conceived in the caverns of human thought. We should amuse you, we should gain your attention, we should keep you awake. But we should neither save ourselves nor those who hear us. Souls may be amused with chaff, but they will not live upon it. "The sincere milk of the word" is that on which alone they will grow and thrive. We teach you theories, systems, conjectures; but we mean that they shall be sober, based upon and limited by the teaching of the word. The instructions of a pastor in a lengthened course of years are necessarily repetitions and monotonous, and are without the interest of novelty and freshness. The word limits his subjects, the constitution of his mind his faculty of presenting them. My voice to you is an old and familiar sound, and it utters now but an oft-told and threadbare tale. Still it is God's truth, and it is ours to speak it faithfully. It can do you good. It must do you good, or nothing will. It will do you good, or you are lost. In the name of our God, again then, we set up our banners. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

## SERMON X.

MAN, GREAT IN HIS LITTLENESS.

Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?—JOB  
VII. 12.

THIS is an expression of wonder, petulance and expostulation, at the strangeness of God's dealings. They seemed to Job unsuitable and disproportionate. Viewing himself as the object of them, he was amazed and disaffected at their character and scale. He was smitten with a convenient modesty; thought himself made of too much consequence by the severity and continuance of his troubles; and pleaded for a respite on the ground of his feebleness and insignificancy. He deemed such an exertion of force, such a stretch of observation, such an expense of care and agency, unmeet, and wasted on so inconsiderable and impotent an object. Men are not apt to think God too lavish of his favours, or excessive in his plans and pains to promote their happiness, when he visits them with smiles and blessings. They feel no disposition to contrast their littleness with the magnitude of his mercies, and are seldom led to wonder at, much less to protest against, the profusion of his bounties and the liberality of his purposes and thoughts of love. But as soon as he frowns and chastens, they are quickly struck with a sense of fitness and proportion, and filled

with wonder and complaining at such an expenditure of attention and power upon so weak and unimportant a creature. Job clothed such a thought as this in the language of my text: "Am I a sea or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?" Am I a turbulent and mighty thing, powerful and mischievous, like the deep or the huge monsters that make it their home, that thou makest me an object of perpetual observation and restraint? "The waves of the sea are mighty and rage horribly;" and "Leviathan whom thou makest to take pastime therein" is strong and terrible. But what is man, impotent and ineffective, that thou pliest him with such ceaseless watchfulness and corrections! Surely, it is unnecessary and unbecoming condescension in thee, to stoop, at such an expense of care and effort, to repress his designs and chastise his faults. Contempt and derision are alone suited to the case of such a puny creature. Let him do his worst; what can he do which is worthy of thy notice or interposition? His greatest mischiefs are below thy regard. His littleness ought to be his defence. It becomes thee only to let him alone in contempt or exterminate him at once with a word, not to throw away upon him so much solicitude and exertion.

Man is treated by God as though he were a thing of magnitude, consequence, might and value. The providence of God magnifies man, proves him to be an object of wonderful interest, concern and solicitude to his Maker. Herein is a mystery. Why am I thus? Thou treatest me as though I were of great value and of great strength. Why?

“Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?” Is there aught magnificent or precious in this poor, frail, brief atom of animated dust, to occupy the attention and employ the vigilance of the great God? “My goodness extendeth not to thee;” and my wickedness cannot reach thee: the utmost harm I can do myself or another is a trifle beneath thy notice. What is there in me to warrant the incessant care and constant effort, the array of means and diversity of operations, thou puttest forth to produce and cherish in me the one, and to repress and correct in me the other? Why squanderest thou thy thought and strength on so worthless a thing? “What is man that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? How long wilt thou not depart from me, and let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?” “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him!”

Yet sure it is: I am treated by my Maker as a thing of value. Wherein does that value consist? I look around amongst his works, and observe their multiplicity, dimensions, durability, splendour, and power. I compare myself with them, and am filled with a feeling of abasement, a sense of insignificance. And yet none of his stupendous and potent creatures has cost him, and yet does cost him so much, as poor, feeble, short-lived I, who, if blotted out of his creation, would make a

void too small to be felt or seen. Besides, all else is orderly, submissive, regular, obedient to the law, and true to the end, of its being. The sun and moon, the planets in their orbits, "the world and the fulness thereof," acquiesce in his authority and fulfil his commands. But I am a "wandering star," rebellious, unruly, eccentric, perverse. I only, of all that I behold, am in a state of revolt and insubordination, setting at naught my Maker's will and defying his power, refusing to fill the place and do the work his wisdom has assigned me. Surely, this puny rebel will be wiped out as an offence, and a stain on the fair beauty of his works. But no: it seems as though my unworthiness were seized upon to evidence more strikingly the high regard and value he places upon me. Vile as well as paltry, I am treated with a wonderful respect, delicacy and forbearance,—made much of, as though my preservation and recovery were a thing very near the heart, very important in the eyes, of God. Nay, I am told that the huge ball I dwell upon is kept and furnished expressly for my residence and comfort, and all its rich furniture and countless population are my utensils and servants; that the great earth, whose trifling inequalities seem to me stupendous heights and depths, and over a few inches of whose surface I crawl as an insect over its sand-heap, was, is, and lasts for my use and pleasure; that I am "redeemed not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ," who, "in the beginning was with God and was God," and yet,—now that he is ascended up on high again—"is not ashamed to call

me brother;" that I am quickened to a new moral life and capacity for holiness by a perpetual efflux of divine influence; that the affairs of this world are all ordered and managed for my benefit and improvement; and that all the events that transpire upon its surface are but exertions of God's watchfulness and anxiety to make me what I should be,—good and happy, according to the intent of my creation. I look within this small, mean, corruptible body, and I find something, not of it, that thinks, wills and loves, and of which I feel an irrepressible conviction, that it will think, will and love forever,—a foresight, between fear and hope, in view of what it now thinks, wills and loves, of its immortality and eternal consciousness and activity. This, I surmise, is what God prizes—the spiritual and immortal, the image of himself, more godlike, and intrinsically of more worth, than hugest masses of inert matter, or highest measures of brute strength, or any stamp or degree of mere irrational and transient animation. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and honour." The human soul,—its similitude to God, its exquisite excellence of substance; its extent and variety of faculties; its infinite improvability; its capacity to know, appreciate, and judge itself; its ability to apprehend God, love, enjoy, adore him, and render to him a rational and voluntary tribute of honour and service; its absolute deathlessness, independence of matter, survivance of the frame and world it dwells in, coëternity with God and destination to everlasting consciousness, activity and progress; its probationary

state, responsibility, sensibility to its own character and circumstances, memory, conscience, and foresight, involving a tremendous capability of enjoyment and of misery; and its actual, certain, speedy, immutable assignment to the "damnation of hell," or to "an eternal and exceeding weight of glory"—vest it with an unspeakable dignity and preciousness, and its condition, fraught with such issues, with an indescribable solemnity and impressiveness. No wonder, then, that He, who has made it such, and placed it thus, so rich, so akin to himself, so awfully exposed, should deem it worthy his attention, watch it with a parent's solicitude, and consult with constant and anxious scheming for its welfare and salvation. The spiritual ranks before the physical, the rational before the animal, the eternal before the mortal; and though the lodge wherein it has taken up its temporary abode be small, weak and perishable, inferior in size and strength to structures around it, which stand tenantless, or occupied by humbler tenants, the Lord, who "looketh not on the outward appearance," knows the value and rareness of the jewel, and cares for it with a regard proportioned to its worth. "Am I a sea or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?" Nay; but I am more. The sea, in its vast expansion, the hid treasure of its "dark unfathomed caves," its resistless violence, destructive rage, and hungry rapaciousness, sweeping us, our treasures, and our works away as things of naught, is yet a poor, inert, passive thing, that knoweth not its Maker and Master, that moveth and acteth only as he rolleth it "in the hollow of his hand," that cannot choose but do as he biddeth it, and

knoweth not its own power and obedience, and is soon to be dried up and pass away in the "fervent heat" of the world's last day. But I know and observe and fear thee; and if I will, may glorify and obey and enjoy thee forever, and be near thee and dear to thee in that new frame of things wherein "there shall be no more sea." The whale, in his huge volume and terrible strength, is yet a creature of mere instinct, that, in obedience to the impulses of its nature, seeks and finds its food and pleasure in the vast field which God has made its home, desires little, acquires nothing, thinks not, hopes not, fears not, and is no more. But I am living for eternity and for God; my thirst for knowledge and for happiness is boundless; my feelings and doings are tied to endless effects; when I die, I do but pass from infancy to manhood; I am preparing for endless bliss or eternal misery. "For who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" Thou, God, art "the Father of spirits." Thou measurest value not by material volume or physical efficiency, but by likeness to thyself, spiritual furniture, length of being. And since thou hast made me thus, I marvel not that thou carest for me thus; I marvel not that by so many precautions, and by such frequent checks and corrections, thou restrainest me from ruining so precious a substance, and filling with wretchedness so durable a being.

But if man be of such magnitude and worth in the eyes of his Maker, on account of his spiritual and immortal nature; if in him vast interests are involved



and at stake, and through his perverseness and folly awfully perilled; while the discovery of this invisible value may serve to explain the fact of God's vigilance and jealousy over him, does not account for the methods in which they are exhibited. The character of God's providence over man is well described in the phrase of Job, "Thou settest a watch over me," which denotes constant distrust, observation, and vigilance, an attitude of suspicion and alarm. It indicates a cautious, artful, indirect manner, such as is appropriate to the pursuit of an end difficult to be compassed, the slow, circuitous, gradual accomplishment of a purpose, the open disclosure and bold prosecution of which might be likely to arouse a mighty and successful resistance. And can this be a true picture of the way in which the great God treats feeble man? I should expect more summary and decisive measures. If man has a valuable soul, in danger of being ruined, nigh perdition, and through his deep sinfulness and insensibility sure, if left by him, to fall into it, I might expect that God who knows its worth and pities its wretchedness, would interpose to rescue it; but then I should look to have him do it as a God, with might, celerity and completeness. Yet our observation and experience show that an opposite course is actually pursued; that God saves man as it were by stratagem, with much pains-taking and multiplied endeavours; that He treats him as a creature of great power as well as of great value, who can effectually resist God's kind designs, who must consent to his own deliverance, who must co-operate in his own recovery,

who must be influenced, and, as it were, gradually and imperceptibly lured, to the pursuit of his own true interests. God watches his opportunity, and teaches him wisdom and goodness "here a little and there a little," now drawing him with "bands of love," and now "visiting his iniquity with stripes," making every event the inlet of a monition, a reproof, a persuasion, and seeking by a long continuance of care and effort, to "bring back his soul from the pit." "Thou stillest the raging of the sea and the noise of his waves," and "thou breakest the heads of Leviathan in pieces" by one word or look; but me "thou settest a watch over," and treatest with great deference and circumspection, as though I were more powerful and unmanageable than they. Here a new phase of human greatness presents itself. Man is not only a spiritual and immortal creature, but a being of will, a voluntary agent, the arbiter of his own destiny, by the liberal gift of his Creator impowered to be and to do what he pleases, and tacitly assured that this high prerogative shall never be violated or overborne. If I will die, I must; if I will live, I may. God, who hath made me thus, will never degrade me into a machine in order to save me. I cannot be saved from misery by mere force, without such an infringement of my right, such a disfranchisement of my privilege of choosing for myself, as would in itself be a terrible perdition. Liberty is a dangerous thing, involving fearful hazards. The control of a wise, good despot might be much safer. Yet who would be a slave? God can only "set a watch over me," and eye me with an affectionate solicitude.

And surely he spares no expense to persuade me to choose aright, and impress me with a sense of my own importance, and of the vastness of the stake dependent on my choice. The blood of his Son, shed that he might have mercy, calleth on me to have mercy on myself. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." His awful judgments and touching visitations, call to me, "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?"

I call upon you, dear brethren, to esteem and treat yourselves, as your God esteems and treats you. Oh! remember that you have souls, akin to God, liberally endowed, immortal, that will live and be happy or wretched, when this earth has been burned up and the "heavens rolled together as a scroll." Remember that God rolls the decision, and the whole responsibility, and the whole momentous result upon you; and that while he waits upon you and watches over you for good, he tells you, "I come quickly," and oftentimes—Oh! how solemnly are we admonished of it!—"as a thief in the night." Oh slumber not over the possession and charge and responsibility of such a treasure. So respected and cared for by the great God, begin to respect and care for yourselves. Cease caring for the things that "perish in the using." "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." "For what shall it profit a man, to gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

## SERMON XI.

## AGAINST BORROWING TROUBLE.

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.—ST. MATTHEW VI. 34.

OUR LORD, in the passage which ends with these words, cautions Christian men against undue solicitude about the future, teaching them to “cast all their care on God who careth for them”—to “be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let their requests be made known unto God;” assuring them, that then, “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” And he enforces his exhortations by a reference to the fowls of the air, and the lilies of the field,—“They sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them:”—“They toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” I said, *undue* solicitude; for it is quite evident that our Saviour did not intend to forbid or discountenance all kinds and degrees of thought and concern for the future, or to press the example of the fowls and the lilies to an exact and literal imitation, as though men, like them, might hope to be fed and clothed without labour or forecast, by simply relying upon God. It is worthy

of notice, that they are incapable of such reliance, and cannot know and trust the God who cares for them. Nor have they faculties by which they can make that provision for their own wants, which God bountifully bestows on them without it. They have neither the reliance which might take the place of industry, nor the industry which might relieve them from reliance. Nature has denied them the endowments which are requisite to either; and therefore they are excused from both. They are liable to no such perversions of religion, as that which finds in faith an apology for idleness; nor to any such self-conceit, as that which loses sight of God in worldly wisdom and endeavour. They can be neither religious nor working creatures; and therefore God takes care of them equally without faith and without labour. But man is capable of both; and therefore, both are exacted of him. He must temper faith with effort, and sanctify effort with faith. Reliance on God alone will soon reduce him to hunger and nakedness; for God never promised to feed and clothe him in that way—he is neither a bird nor a flower. And yet, the most wise and well directed labour, unconsecrated by trust and gratitude and prayer, though it may feed him with sumptuous fare and array him in gorgeous apparel, will subject him to the displeasure of God; and then, it will soon appear, that his “riches are corrupted, and his garments are moth-eaten;” that “his gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against him, and shall eat his flesh as it were fire;” that “he has heaped treasure together for the last days.” It is evident

then, that the bird and the lily are simply held out to us as tokens of God's care for his creatures, of appropriate care, such care as the nature and qualifications of the creature require, care for the bird suited to it, care for the lily suited to that, and care for man suited to *him*. God's intervention begins, where the creature's ability ends. And when the creature has consumed its power, God will do for it all that is necessary for its real welfare beyond that. It were a degradation of man to care for him as for the bird or the lily; for that were to treat him as though he were unintelligent or insensate. We have thought and action, and when we duly employ these with a proper sense of our dependence, God will prosper our wisdom and industry, and prove to us by experience, how true it is, that "they who fear the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good." All forecast and thought about the future is not forbidden. We could not live without it, according to the order of providence. We could not avoid it with our natural constitutions. Without a reference to the future we could not properly carry on the system of life. The very inferior orders of creatures, to which our Saviour refers us, teach a different lesson from this. The plant one year forms the bud which is to be the foliage and flowering of a second. The bee stores up its hoard for future use. The ant "provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest."

But it is quite evident that there is a limit to this care, and that this limit man is greatly prone to transcend. And it is against this tendency that our Lord

directs his warning. We are given to thinking about the future atheistically and self-conceitedly, as though there were no God to take care of it, as though it were given up to a blind fate, to be the sport of accident, or the prey of a ruthless and unfeeling destiny; and as though all that was to be done to rescue it from the caprices of chance or the decrees of unsympathizing power, is to be done by us, with our contracted forethought, our feeble judgment, and limited ability. Then, we grow uneasy, apprehensive, fretful and fault-finding, and poison all present blessings with the anticipation of coming evil, depreciate them in contrast with brilliant dreams, and pile upon the sure and inevitable troubles of the present the troubles of a future, that may never come, or if it comes, will not be cheered or mitigated by our present untimely forebodings. The true Christian temper of mind is to look seriously, attentively and calmly on the prospect before us, as the shadows of coming events loom up to view, put ourselves in the best posture we can devise to endure the shock or welcome the blessing, and apply ourselves quietly and faithfully to the course of action which seems appropriate to the circumstances, if any there be, with prayer to God that he will not let us be harmed by the good or ill that futurity carries in its bosom. Then, we ought not to suffer our thoughts to dwell upon it, so as to turn the present stale with some delirious hope, and render it all uneasy and tumultuous with panting impatience and curiosity, or becloud it with dark shadows and images of possible or probable calamity, but leave it with God, who alone has any effectual care and order-

ing of it, and who, whatever it may be charged with, will not forget his promise, that he will "make all things work together for good to them that love him," and "will keep those whose minds are stayed on him in perfect peace." To draw the line between a justifiable, salutary concern for the future, and one which is sinful and injurious, with mathematical precision, is impracticable. It is not a thing of definition, but of spiritual instinct. A right heart feels it, though it is not to be delineated in words. In general we may say, that all anticipation is wrong which implies any distrust of Almighty wisdom and goodness, which needlessly imbitters the present with painful apprehensions, or which clogs and enfeebles the man in the task which present duty prescribes, by the distracting influence of hope, or the benumbing operation of fear.

The text is a caution against what is commonly called, and not inappropriately, borrowing trouble, or adding to the evil of to-day the evil of to-morrow by anticipation. A slightly different translation makes the sense clearer and more forcible—Sufficient unto the day is its own evil. Its own evil is that evil which is its inevitable portion. And this is here impliedly set in opposition to the additional and factitious evil which arises from the real or supposed foresight of approaching trouble. This borrowing trouble is unwise, unprofitable, mischievous; it needlessly augments the miseries of life; it unnecessarily abridges the sum of human enjoyment; it is unworthy an enlightened philosopher; it contradicts and dishonours the creed and profession of a Christian.



Let us consider then, first, that the evil of the day is sufficient for it, always as much as it will well bear, and needing no foreign and gratuitous enhancements. Evil is meted out to man by a Hand, that is not only sovereign and irresistible, but also wise and benignant. He apportions it, and assigns to each day of life its own appropriate, and profitable share. The distribution of evil, any more than its existence, is not fortuitous nor capricious. It is the fruit of forethought, design and consideration. Viewed as a remedy, it is administered with discrimination and judgment. Viewed as discipline, it is applied with an accurate and discerning reference to the condition and character of its subjects. The remedy is in the hands of Infallibility, that cannot fail to distribute it aright. The discipline is directed by One, who measures the want and the efficacy with an unerring exactness. Evil, surely, is no where so safely trusted as in the hands of God, who "does not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men," but "corrects them with judgment." What should we think of that physician, who should estimate at the outset how much medicine was necessary to restore the patient, and force the whole of it upon him at once, instead of dividing it into portions to be given to him from day to day and from hour to hour, as the phases and changes of his disorder may indicate, but that he was more likely to kill than to cure? Or what should we think of correction bestowed at the fancy or caprice of the master, and not with a discerning reference to the cure of the pupil, but that it would be more apt to harden than to reform? And now suppose that the patient or the pupil should take the matter into his

own hands; that the first should choose to take half a dozen doses of the medicine at once, and the second to consolidate into a day, the punishment of a month; would it be well for them to have their way? The success of that regimen of discipline under which we live, of which evil is an essential instrumentality, depends altogether upon its enlightened and judicious administration, its appointment in various measures to suit our ever-varying necessity. Every day has its own evil, and that evil is sufficient for it, just so much as suits its occasions, no more, no less. The administration would not be improved by our interference. God knows us thoroughly, just what we are, and what we need. We need never fear any error, any deficiency, any excess, in his treatment. The thing is safest where it is. Sufficient then unto the day is the evil thereof. Evil comes in various measures, but it is never absent. Its stream runs parallel with the current of life, and every where touches and tinges it. Is not the evil of the day enough for it? Who wants more? Who finds any occasion to go hunting into the recesses of futurity to find material to eke it out to a respectable magnitude? Who is so cloyed with the sweetness and richness of his cup, that he feels constrained to look about him for some bitter to moderate the oppressive felicity? Who is so happy, that he feels obliged to turn self-tormentor, and manufacture a little misery to himself, so as to restore things to a decent equilibrium? The evil of the day is enough for it. The day has its evil. It comes as surely as the day. The evil the day needs, the evil God has appointed for it, wisely, kindly, paternally, with that let us be

content, and neither murmur under it nor foolishly augment it.

Consider, again, that this borrowing trouble is a doubling of life's evil. We have it once in actual experience. That is inevitable. There is no escaping it but by removing out of the flesh. It is God's appointment for us. "We may not contend with Him that is stronger than we." If we are wise, we shall not essay the silly undertaking. And there is enough of evil in life to make it sufficiently sombre. I do not think we need to be touching it up with additional shades of melancholy. There is enough of it which we cannot get rid of. Now then, what is the use of rehearsals? Where is the wisdom of taking our griefs one by one before they come, feeling them, groaning under them, sighing over them, and laying the shadowy things up to be borne again in all their dire reality when we reach them in their turn? We are to-day bearing the grief of to-day; and as certain as the day is here, the grief is with it, great or small. Now suppose we reach forward and lay hold of the grief of to-morrow, and picture it out to ourselves, and make it as real as we can, and murmur under its load. What do we do but bear to-morrow's grief twice, when we need only bear it once? God appoints it to us once, and we appoint it to ourselves twice. Surely grief must be a most desirable luxury, to be so eagerly sought and so ingeniously obtained. Such borrowed sorrows are not salutary. God's inflictions may do us good, will do us good, if wisely borne; but these self-inflictions are utterly unprofitable. God withheld them from us

because they were not salutary, by darkening the future with a veil. We tear the veil apart, and feed our grief with our discoveries. And what is the effect? The nerve of resolution is unstrung, the arm of exertion is paralyzed, we grow timid and desponding, the dark side of things is always before us, we fret against God, and become ungrateful for our blessings, and unfit for our duties.

Consider, still further, that many of these borrowed troubles are unreal and deceptive. We not only heap upon the troubles of to-day the troubles of to-morrow, but troubles that are no where. We cannot tell what to-morrow will be till to-morrow comes; and then it may differ greatly from our expectations. Certainly, it often has. We are only guessing, and guessing very much at random. We know there will be evil in to-morrow, for that is inseparable from life; but what it will be, how much, of what sort, we only imagine, and often very erroneously. Our insight into the future is very feeble and uncertain. We scarcely see distinctly an inch before us. Our whole life past has been teaching us that lesson. Perpetually, our life has been taking turns that we did not foresee, and running wide of objects which seemed to be right before us. "The way of man is not in himself." "We know not what shall be on the morrow." Anticipated good often disappears; but then, do not grim monsters that stand menacing in our paths often vanish too? That which looks so dark to us may be light when we reach it.}]

"The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head."

Is it wise, is it right, to make ourselves unhappy about that which may never come, which may be so different from our fears if it does come, which, if it be the very worst we anticipate, will be after all a blessing in disguise? For—

Consider, finally, the future is in the hands of God. And is it not then in good hands, in competent hands, in judicious hands, in friendly hands? Where else should it be? Where else would we have it? What can our premature grievings about it do? Any thing to make it better? How futile are all these forebodings and anxieties of ours! How little can they effect! “Which of you with taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?” “Thou canst not make one hair white or black.” But I very well know, that it is vain to think of curing men of their solicitude by reminding them of their weakness. They will not grieve the less over impending evil because they have no power to avert it, but the more. But may we not hope to cure it by reminding them of God—God, the wise, the considerate, the gracious, the kind—God, their father and their friend—God, “the father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” in Him “reconciling the world unto himself,” and “making all things work together for good to them that love him?” Surely, we may. Have faith in God. Cast all your care upon him. Commit yourselves into his hands. Leave all your interests at his disposal.

“The God of heaven is ours,  
Our Father and our Love,  
His care shall guard life’s fleeting hours,  
Then waft our souls above.”

## SERMON XII.

## THE REVERENCE OF CHILDHOOD.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones.—ST. MATTHEW  
XVIII. 10.

OUR SAVIOUR passed through all the stages of human life, that he might bless and sanctify them all. And as they all are sharers in his salvation, so are they all partakers of his sufferings. We all in our own sphere and way help to “fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ,” and all taste that bitter cup of which he drank so deeply, that by assimilation to him in pain we may become also participants of his glory. He, “the Prince of peace,” yet “came not to bring peace on earth but a sword;” and significantly its first stroke fell on children when he first began to be a child, and the sword that sought his life exalted childhood to unconscious martyrdom for his sake. And surely, on the day\* when we think of Christ as a child, and of those children, who at the beginning of his life laid down their lives on his account, it is meet that we should consider, what childhood, thus honoured by Christ and for Christ, is, and what claims it has to our serious consideration and religious regard. And the words of our Saviour which I have just read may well serve to direct and inform our meditations.

We are not wont to look upon childhood as an object

\* Holy Innocents.

of reverence, and yet such our Saviour seems to esteem and represent it. When his disciples, viewing children with worldly eyes, reprov'd men for bringing them to him, as though they were of too small importance to occupy his time and attention, and it were superstitious to suppose them capable of deriving benefit from coming to him, he reprov'd them in return, and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." He tells us, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is in heaven." And he cautions men against falling into that habit of holding them in light esteem to which they are prone: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." Children are very apt to be treated with disrespect; but this disrespect is thoughtless, shallow, unbelieving. When men slight a child, they look upon it according to its appearance and as it is, and forget what is in it and what it is to be. The more reflective, enlightened and far-seeing a man is, the less will he be disposed to despise a child. Frivolous, unthinking persons may—a philosopher will do no such thing. And what shall we say of a Christian who does it, but that he betrays a sad want of reflection and forethought, or that his views of the Gospel are terribly warped by false theories of the laws of grace, and the modes and circumstances of its working on human souls. And yet men of more consideration and of better theories, it is to be feared, seldom realize childhood as it is, or feel as they ought the momentous-

ness of their relations to it, or the measure of their duty and their influence in regard to it.

Let us consider then some of the claims of childhood to the reverence of men.

What is a child? A child is then the germ of a man; and he who looks upon it with just and enlightened eyes sees in it the man it is destined to be. He is no just judge of a thing who fails to recognise in it any capacity it may possibly possess of becoming more than it is. In despising a mean present, we may be despising the promise of a glorious futurity. A bud is the prophecy of a flower and of a fruit. And he who crushes an acorn under foot, crushes under foot the possibility of an oak with all its strength and greatness and endurance and manifold utility. A wise man looks upon a child and prophesies; he sees it in its future as well as in its now, he sees it as it is to be far more than as it is. A child is such a germ, for it is a being of mind, and as such is a creature of great improvability: its present ignorance capable of being displaced by great acquisitions of knowledge; its mental weakness capable of being cultivated into great intelligence and great intellectual power. None that look upon a child can foretell where the limits of its development and acquisition will be. Solomon was a child, and Plato and Newton, and so were all who have made the highest attainments in knowledge and wisdom, all the giants of letters and science. Even an ordinary man is a wonder, if he look at the number of things he knows, and the power and compass of his thoughts. A child, as a being of mind, is a person.



This he is by virtue of his participation of humanity, to which alone of earthly existences mind pertains. There is nothing else in all this world but human beings, that is more than a thing. And who can tell how wide is the interval between a person and a thing, the meanest person and the most exalted thing? The child's is an incipient personality, but it is a true personality, and it contains the pledge of its own maturity. And personality is incomparably the greatest thing this world contains, upon every just and enlightened principle of computation. It is this which constitutes man the image of God, as it consists in the possession of an intellectual and moral nature like his. Brute strength or material magnitude is nothing to this. Man is the possessor of a soul. This allies him to angels and all orders of higher intelligences; while it puts a wide distinction between him and all other earthly beings. In this world, hence, he is not of it. And all approaches to this his peculiar glory, in beings of this world, are but pitiful imitations and abortive endeavours. As a person he possesses character. He is voluntary. He chooses his own end and his own course. He exercises judgment in the adaptation of means to his purposes. He knows his Maker, comprehends the idea of law, understands what a free obedience is, feels responsibility, and anticipates reward. He acts from motives. He is not driven by blind impulses, and drawn by blind instincts, to do just what, with unvarying sameness, his race have always done, without capacity to alter or vary his course of action. He makes the accumulated wisdom of all past generations

the basis of new advances and new inventions, and by the energy and inventiveness of his will stamps on his life individuality and originality. He comprehends his own history, sees himself in the past as well as in the present, traces the progress of his life, realizes its continuity, and, through a long train of events and actions, feels the unbroken line of his being, himself always the very same recipient and doer. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding." And we need but look at his learning and his works to see how much he is capable of knowing and of doing. This spiritual nature exalts him very high above any being that is destitute of it. There are in this world things of man's making physically much greater than himself. But the maker is greater than his work; and they are but shadows and evidences of his spiritual greatness.

A child is an immortal being. What a transcendent value does this impress upon him! He shall outlive the world in which he lives, and the world has its chief value as the place in which he may learn to live an eternal life. The proudest structures of his skill, the most enduring monuments of his ability, ingenuity and perseverance, must in the end crumble and come to nought. There is nothing of all we see, however excellent, firm, incorruptible, that is not destined in the end to perish. "The world passeth away." "Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou

change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. And the children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." To man alone, of all things in this visible creation, has God given being in perpetuity, without liability to recall, or possibility of discontinuance; to him alone, communicated a share of his own immortality. To what an immeasurable distinction does this exalt him! How great is he in his littleness! A babe is greater than a mountain. What is a star to a child! The stars shall fade, at last, and "fall from heaven, as a fig-tree casteth her untimely fruit." But the child is the beginning of a being, which is to last always, whose weal or woe is to run parallel with the existence of its Maker. It is a lamp kindled never to go out, a spring welling forth to flow forever, the shooting of a seed that shall not wither, nor cease to yield fruit eternally. What a dignity does this impart to man! What solemnity attaches to the beginning of such a creature! Who will look upon a child thoughtlessly or treat it carelessly—spark of the heavenly, beginning to shine upon the earth—germ of an existence that is to outlast the earth itself! No wise man will ever think a child a proper thing to regard with contempt or disrespect or indifference. The wise men of old time fell down and worshipped the infant Jesus, looking on him with the prophetic eye of faith. And all wise men look upon a child and prophesy; they see the future in him, they see eternity in him. They reverence in him the eternal, and feel how poor, in comparison of it, is all

material, perishable greatness, power and splendour. There is not a child for which the Lord did not come down from heaven to live and die. And He it is, who says to men in a voice of solemn warning, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones."

We are to remember, that on the present treatment of the child, largely depends the future of the man. It is this consideration that renders our subject practical. This takes it away from the region of mere sentiment, and brings it into the sphere of practice. It would matter little, what were our thoughts of a child, if our thinking exerted no influence on its character. But the case is very different. Our thinking will determine our conduct, and our conduct will go far to fix its condition. It is a lump of clay, to be made a vessel unto honour, or a vessel unto dishonour, a vessel of wrath, or a vessel of salvation. It is a slender and tractable branch; and "just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined." We are the child's educators. We may not be the child's parents, or its sponsors, or its guardians, or its teachers, or its pastors, or its employers, or sustain any definite relation to it; but if it is moving about in the sphere we occupy, we are its educators. Every time we come into contact with it, we leave our mark upon it. It is a fearful thing, to be jostling against such an impressible thing, and making, by our careless or awkward or wanton motions, traces upon it which are ineffaceable. And yet this is what we are doing all the while. A man might, more prudently and harmlessly, walk blindfold and rough-shod over a floor bespread with precious articles, so fragile,

as hardly to endure a touch. It is a small part of education only that is done in schools and nurseries and churches. The common seeing and hearing of out door life, the unconsidered communications, the careless department of common time are doing their part also, and that by no means the least. We despise these little ones, when we fail to remember, that we, in these ways, are contributing to form them and fix them forever. No man will easily convince others that he has a proper estimation of jewels which he carelessly tosses about and tramples upon. We despise a little one, when we neglect it, when we do not put forth a purposed effort, if opportunity is given to be beneficial to it. We despise a little one, when we inconsiderately utter sentiments to it or before it which are injurious or corrupting. We despise a little one, when we suffer our passions to run riot in its presence, or give ourselves up to the free indulgence of vicious and debasing inclinations. The child is an imitative being, and has an instinctive reverence for grown persons. Men and women are its models, and its efforts run strongly in the line of an attempt to be what they are and to do what they do. And this process of incidental education begins very early; none can tell just how early; all observing persons agree early, earlier far, there is much reason to believe, than men who do not consider, suppose. It is not incredible, that a bent may be given to a child, which shall tell upon it all its lifetime for good or for evil, before it is out of its mother's arms; and the surroundings of an infant's cradle may not be unimportant to its final destiny. Its tastes and its ways oftentimes originate in

circumstances so far back, that they are overlooked in its history. How important then, to a child's welfare are the objects and events that are around it from its beginning, the sights it sees, the sounds it hears, the forms of life it witnesses, the persons, the habits, the scenes, it is conversant with. And all the value that attaches to a child, as the possessor of an intellectual and spiritual nature, and an heir of immortality, passes over to the influences which surround and operate upon it, to mould or mar it, into "an eternal excellency," or an endless wretchedness.

Despise not little ones by neglecting to bring them to Christ. Christ has said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The doors of his church are open for their admission, that therein they may be engrafted into his body, and receive that grace, by which, duly improved, they may be made heirs of salvation. If we will have Christ's blessing, we must seek it in his appointed way. Oh! how greatly do they wrong their children, how little do they treat them as spiritual and immortal creatures, who do not bring them to Christ, that Christ, who suffers them to come to him at the very dawn of their being, that they may go forth into the world, shielded by his blessing, and restrained and led by his gracious Spirit.

They despise little ones, who neglect to care for their religious training and nurture. Their coming to Christ in Baptism, great as the privilege is, and real and certain as is the grace it bestows, is not saving, unless they are trained up into the way wherein they should go.

What numbers of baptized children fail to receive the treatment which befits "members of Christ," and recipients of the grace of Christ, as though Christ were to do all without men, or had done nothing on which men might build the hope of success in doing! And how many children, growing up among Christians in neglect and ignorance, will carry back at last the report to their and our great Judge, "No man cared for my soul!" Ah, brethren, by your firesides, teach with line upon line, those whom God hath committed to your charge, and bring them, and the children of the poor to the house of God, and within the reach of Christian instruction, and God, who made them immortal, will give you an immortal reward.

Finally, never think lightly of a child, never consider it of small importance, how you treat it, what you do or say before it. Remember rather, that it is one of the most susceptible and retentive beings in the universe, that it is taking a form, and that you, by all you say or do in its presence, are contributing to determine that form; that this form it will keep for ever, a source of infinite joy or wo to itself, an instrumentality of infinite benefit or mischief to others.

## SERMON XIII.

## OUR CALLING.

Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.  
1 COR. VII. 20.

THE calling, in which we are here directed to abide, is "that state of life into which it hath pleased God to call us," our place in the world, our business, occupation, position among men. This calling comes to us through the disposition of Providence, and the operation of providential influences which God creates and employs. Hence our worldly calling is of God; God's voice and will speak in it. We are the subjects of two callings. There is our "high calling of God in Christ Jesus." That is the calling of Grace. And there is our outward situation in life, the particular department of human action, in which God calls us to employ our faculties. That is the calling of Providence. In the text both these callings are mentioned, our temporal and our spiritual calling; and we are directed to abide in the same temporal calling, wherein we may be, when we are spiritually called. And the simple meaning is, that our becoming religious does not alter our worldly position and business, nor call for its abandonment, unless it be intrinsically sinful. Yet, that this precept is not absolute and unconditional, the context shows—"Art thou called being a servant?



care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather." A Christian man is not then forbidden to change his outward condition, if he can, and may change it with advantage; but his becoming a Christian effects no such change by its own force; and so far from rendering him uneasy and dissatisfied, it should tend to make him more contented, faithful and patient in his lot, even though, as the case instanced in the context indicates, that lot be slavery.

A Christian man is not to murmur or be fretful and restless in that situation which the providence of God has assigned to him, but to be patient, quiet, submissive and cheerful in it. Still, an advantageous change he may properly welcome, and even seek, so it be not in a rebellious spirit, and in contempt and desertion of present duties.

Grace, when it takes possession of a man, does not alter his place in society, nor annul the obligations that pertain to it, unless it be intrinsically wrong and sinful, requiring of him a course of action which is immoral and injurious. If that be its character, it is the devil's calling and not God's, and we cannot too promptly abandon it at whatever sacrifice; for unless we do so, we show that we are not effectually "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." We owe the devil's behests no obedience; but we do owe them a sturdy defiance. All lawful temporal callings Christianity encircles in its embrace, and tells its disciples, in whatever temporal calling grace finds them, when it calls them into God's service, therein to abide, in the

faithful and patient discharge of its duties, till God, if it ever pleases him to do so, shall raise them to a higher station and a more congenial service. And yet this they are not forbidden humbly to desire, modestly to seek, and gladly to welcome. A few verses beyond the text, the Apostle says, "Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." And this assures us, that while we thus wait and labour in our calling, we may have God with us to help and comfort us, if we will walk with him in it, therein abiding in the recollection, fear and service of God. And thus, as our worldly calling is of God, so is God with us in it, to make it sweet and comfortable to us, if we will only be in it with him, trusting in him, obeying him, and seeking his glory.

Now, what I wish to impress upon you is, that our temporal condition, with that peculiar form of life which it imposes, is a calling, and is such, because God has called us into it. I would remind you, that the fashion of our existence in this world is not an accident, not the fruit of chance, nor of our own will, nor of the will of other men. God has assigned us our place. God has set us our task. Whether we shall work with our brains or our hands, and in which of the various departments of human activity that belong to either, he has determined. The word calling, often so flippantly and unthinkingly used by us, is itself a memorial of that solemn fact, which has thus permanently stamped its mark upon the language of men, and imbedded itself in the very substance of their diction; and thus, this solemn fact, embalmed in speech,

on the tongues of men outlives too often the correspondent sentiment in their hearts. For, however lightly and atheistically men may speak of their calling, the word itself, on their thoughtless lips, is never light nor atheistic, but one that is a witness for God, and for that overruling providence of his, which ordereth all things in heaven and earth. Yes, calling is a religious and holy word, that testifies to men against themselves, reminding them ever of their duty, and reproving always their restlessness and unfaithfulness. "How important,\* indeed, is the truth which we express in the naming our work in this world our vocation, or which is the same, finding utterance in homelier Anglo-Saxon, our calling. What a calming, elevating, solemnizing view of the tasks which we find ourselves set in this world to do, this word would give us, if we did but realize it to the full. We did not come to our work by accident; we did not choose it for ourselves; but, under much which may wear the appearance of accident and self-choosing, came to it by God's leading and appointment. What a help is this thought to enable us to appreciate justly the dignity of our work, though it were far humbler work, even in the eyes of men, than that of any one of us present! What an assistance in calming unsettled thoughts and desires, such as would make us wish to be something else than that which we are! What a source of confidence, when we are tempted to lose heart, and to doubt whether we shall be able to carry through our work with any blessing or profit to ourselves or others! It

\* Trench on the Study of Words.

is our vocation, our calling; and He who called us to it will fit us for it, and strengthen us in it."

That the circumstances, which frame our outward condition into its actual fashion, are of God's ordering, none will doubt, who believe in the presence and agency of God in the affairs of the world. Our parentage, the period of our birth, the associations of our childhood, the events that betide us in our early days, the influences that act upon us as we advance to manhood, all the causes that co-operate to fasten upon our life the form it finally and permanently assumes, that determine what place we shall fill in the social scale, and what we shall spend our days in doing, are of God's ordering and fixing. He selects and combines them, and he deduces the issue. "We are the clay, and he our potter." And if we will look back to the history of our own thoughts, and study the workings of our minds, such as they were, when once we stood upon the verge of life's broad arena, and surveyed with anxious and timid eyes the various paths and fields it presented to view, seeking with such choice as the stern compulsion of circumstances left open to us, to select our path of pilgrimage and field of toil, gladly embracing this opportunity, sadly acquiescing in this necessity, shall we not feel that there was on us a hand of power, that first, created in us the tastes, aspirations, inclinations, qualities, capacities, all that we mean by the bent of the man, and then, brought around us the inexorable and despotic outward facts, which hedged in, limited and controlled its action; till finally, through the mutual counteraction and

yielding of the inward and outward, meting out to us so much of suppression and so much of indulgence, a restraint here and a liberty there, the nature of God's making, and the thought of God's inspiring, working amidst influences and circumstances of God's producing, at last wrought themselves out into a calling, that station and work, which are to be regarded as the will of God concerning us, as constituting that state of life into which it hath pleased God to call us.

Men are wont to say, that the office and work of a minister, if rightly undertaken, is the fruit of a special divine call. And accordingly, the Church, when she is about to admit a man to the ministry, asks him, and exacts an affirmative answer, whether he thinks that he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him that sacred office. And this is unquestionably a just view. But think you, dear brethren, that I am called to my work, and you are not equally called to yours? I trow not. The calling of a man to be a minister has only a little more of solemnity and specialty and sacredness of object; but it is not more real or divine than the calling of a man to be any thing else. And if men would but think of this, there would be less levity and negligence and complaining among men in respect to their place and work. Think you, that if God has assigned you your place and work, as truly as mine to me, you have more right and freedom to disesteem and slight and despise your occupation, than I mine? I know not where you got it. A wicked, slothful, discontented trader or artisan is as certainly an offender, as a wicked, slothful, discontented, minister. There was a time when each one of us

selected his employment, not just that, in most instances, which our bent would have dictated, but the nearest to it, that the force of facts and events, wholly beyond our control, left open to us. God had created a fitness for a certain place by our natural constitution and antecedent training. God had awakened a desire for it in our hearts by influences directed upon them for the purpose. God had arranged the circumstances that hemmed in, narrowed and bent aside our liberty of action. We came to be what we are; and this is our calling. It is the echo of God's voice, the fulfilment of God's determination. And thus is every place in a rightly ordered community duly supplied; and each in his place, the mechanic, the tradesman, the lawyer, the physician, the soldier, as truly as the minister, sees himself, if he looks on his place with enlightened and religious eyes, divinely designated to it, and brought into it. And thus the whole sum of society, in all its complicated framework, its mutual relations and dependences, its necessary gradations and shares of honour and advantage, will appear to be a visible outgoing of the divine will, instinct throughout with a divine presence, a divine authority, and a divine blessing; and every member of the same, in his own proper station and work, his special "vocation and ministry," believing God made his place for him and him for his place, will be enabled to walk in it with God, without pride in elevation, with self-respect in inferiority, in a spirit of cheerful submission, conscientious fidelity, and lowly hope.

What we contend for, is, that every Christian should believe himself called to every work in which he finds his occupation and his livelihood; and that, except he believes this, the work of life, whatever it may be outwardly, will be unholy and cheerless, lack its best stimulus and its purest support and comfort, and be pursued without confidence in God, or any expectation of high and worthy fruit. Only, if there be any place in society, whose occupant escapes work and lives in idleness, though he may think himself happy in it, we must tell him, that either his calling is not of God but of the devil, or else it is some calling of God, of which the devil has gained surreptitious and unlawful possession. For, the rich man, who is exempt from the necessity of relying on some trade or profession for a living, is not so exempt, in order that he may be an idler, and spend his days in an inglorious and unprofitable ease. He also has a calling, and a calling has always a work, and the work of his calling is by no means the least arduous and difficult; and if, because he is not driven to it by the stern pressure of necessity, he leaves it undone, and dies a mere loiterer and cumberer of the ground, his will be the fearful reckoning of one, who wrapped not one but many talents in a napkin and hid them in the earth. While he, whose place is given him at the base of the social system, will feel this divine element in society stealing down to him with a refreshing influence, to sooth his troubles, and make smooth the rugged ways to his feet, while it assures him, that as he too stands in his lot by the will of God, so he is doing divine work as

well as his fellows, a work, that, whatever be its aspect and estimation, is redeemed from all real meanness and disgrace by that fact; and that God will sweeten it to him, if he is faithful in it, with his blessing, and crown it, at its end, with life for evermore.

This view of our work as a calling communicates dignity and comfort to life, and this not in some of its ranges, but in all of them. The precious ointment on the head goes down to the skirts of the garments. There is no valley in life so low, that the dew of divine service does not visit and refresh it. The honour of the noble head pervades the family, stops not at the favourite of the lord, or chief officer of the household, but goes on till it reaches the bottom of the social fabric; and the lowest menial shines in the reflected lustre of his Master. And if, to the lowly position belongs a goodness which the higher wants, why then, to it attaches the moral, and that is a real, superiority, an intrinsic is added to this relative nobleness; and thus the humblest place in life is thoroughly redeemed from all meanness and degradation. It is said that no part of a family feels its consequence more strongly than its slaves; and that none is prouder of his situation than the servant of a great man. And surely, then, there can be no debasement in filling any station, which God has created and assigned to us. It is an honour to serve him in any place. If we learn to look upon the various stations in life, as only a divine distribution of the parts of God's service among his servants, a thing throughout so excellent and illustrious, that it is a privilege and an



enviable distinction to obtain the lowest share in it, we shall never look upon our own station as disgraceful and degrading, whatever it may be.

It is looking upon our lot in life apart from God, viewing ourselves as the sport of a blind chance, or the victim of human tyranny, caprice or injustice, that makes us despise and scorn it, view it with a bitter contempt and an indignant hatred. Only let us look at it as our calling, the utterance of God's will, and the appointment of God's wisdom, and we shall respect it, and ourselves in it; for we shall see, that we are parts of a system, in which, it is an honour to hold any position, of a mechanism so glorious, that the cog of the smallest wheel, or the cord of the obscurest pulley, that is needful to its well-being and well-working, is honoured by its function; and, doing a work which is as necessary to the great result as that which is accomplished by things of greater magnitude and show, it is as truly honourable as they, and as justly entitled to an intelligent appreciation and regard. Nothing has so elevating an influence on men as to feel that they are members of a divine economy, in which honour depends not upon place, but upon faithfulness; so that some who are far down in it, may be higher in the estimation of Him, whose judgment is its only rule of eminence, than many that are outwardly above them, as sweet violets lie low and nestle in the sod, overhung and hidden by tall, thrifty, but idle weeds, and gaudy, but scentless blossoms. "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness." And he, into whose heart this

conviction enters, and becomes practical, has such a balm for the woes of life, as none other knows. Poverty, obscurity, toil, neglect, contumely, may cleave to his condition, but God honours him, an eye of commendation and encouragement guides and guards his steps; and there is always in his heart the sweet whisper of "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much," pledge of a fast coming, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over few things; I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

But if this view of the work of life as a calling confers on life a dignity, that relieves and gladdens it, so does it also load it with a weight of responsibility, which communicates to it a tincture of seriousness and solemnity. Seeing that all stations are of God, it is indeed a grave and awful thing to live in any station. That station, whatever it may be, whatever relations it may involve, is God's appointment for us, and indicates to us his particular will concerning us. It renders our duty specific, circumscribes and fixes it. We are not to think ourselves above it. We are not to neglect it, or do it carelessly. We are not to substitute any other work for it, or give any other work the preference to it. We may not put it aside, to attend to anything else, that better pleases our fancy, or more gratifies our pride. It will not answer for us to do another man's work, however well we think we can do it, or can do it actually. We are to do our own work; that God requires of us, and he will not take any thing from us in its stead. No morality, nor zeal, nor

laboriousness will compensate for unfaithfulness in the business of our place. God does not ask at our hands volunteer services, but prescribed and ordered services; and if in the final reckoning we undertake to recite our performances of the former kind, we shall be cut short with the inquiry, Who hath required this at your hand? how did you fill your station? A soldier, who is appointed to stand sentry, will not escape censure, if he has left his post to reconnoitre the enemy's camp, or capture a solitary straggler. Nor will a farmer be satisfied with his servant, who leaves his field unplowed, to instruct his neighbour in agricultural science. Wives and mothers, who forsake their place in domestic life, to undertake the reformation of society, and neglect duties to vindicate rights, are not serving God; nor are men who desert their business to become exhorters, and enlighten their fellow men in morals and religion. When every man does his own work, the specific service of his place, then is the welfare of society most advanced, God's will best done, the Gospel best recommended, and the souls of men best fitted for eternal life. Let us then learn to look upon the work of our station, whatever it may be, as our calling, and hear ever in our ears, God's voice in it, saying to us, Here work, and here be faithful, and I will give thee a crown of life.

## SERMON XIV.

## THE HIDDEN LIFE.

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.—COLOSSIANS III. 3, 4.

DEATH does not destroy human life but secretes it, removes it from the sphere in which mortals dwell, and shuts it away from their notice and observation. Henceforth, it is a hidden life, concealed from the eyes of living men by a veil, which is so thick and impervious, that all attempts to penetrate the regions which it encloses and covers are utterly futile and unsuccessful. The land of the dead is Hades, the unseen, the invisible. There is an analogous spiritual operation, of which the text speaks in terms and images drawn from this. And indeed the two are not utterly disconnected; for that spiritual concealment in which the believer lives on earth, and that physical hiding into which he enters at death, shall be ended together; and one resurrection bring his spiritual and his natural life simultaneously to light, when Christ who is his life shall appear, and he appear with him in glory.

There is an important sense in which the life of man under the influence of divine grace may be said to be hidden, that is, removed from the sphere in which he visibly exists while he is yet a dweller upon earth, to

have passed away from the observation and notice of his fellow men, and become a hidden life. To the world, henceforth, it is a secret and a mystery, an object of curiosity or of unbelief, never rightly understood and appreciated. "Behold!" says St. John, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." The life of a true Christian is an incomprehensible thing to a worldling. It has passed out of the sphere which he inhabits, and is not open to his inspection and examination. He has no access to it to watch and study it, and no answering experience out of which to interpret its apparent phenomena. It of necessity remains to him an enigma, dwelling in an inapproachable seclusion, whose secrecy remains inviolable, "a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." He sees but its shell—the circumstances that outwardly environ it, and some of its lower actings and expressions in view of them. But these let him not far into the nature and mode of its inward being.

To express this great change, by which the life of a man's spirit, while he yet dwells on earth, may thus, in a most important and real sense, be transferred to a new and unseen sphere, and become a hidden life to his fellows, the text borrows the imagery of natural death, and speaks of the subject of it as one who has ceased to be, in reference to a state from which he has passed away, and the objects and pursuits which pertain to it, and has entered into a new condition of existence, of which his former companions have no per-

ception or cognizance. The image is very strong and vigorous. "Ye are dead," the apostle boldly says to the Christian. But what then? Have you in consequence no longer a life? Not at all. Death, to a religious mind, never suggests any such idea. Death is but an event in life, an epoch in the historic development of immortality. As then death, in the literal, natural sense, is but the exaltation of life, by a process of apparent interruption, to a higher style and method, so here, in its metaphorical and spiritual sense, it is but the transfer of it, upon an apparent cessation, to a different circle of action and communication, and that, one far purer and more glorious. Henceforth it is a life "hid with Christ in God." Christ has gone up to God, and, as to the visibility of his presence, removed from that sphere in which living mortals dwell. So it has gone up to God with him, and dwells where he does, finding in God its object, support and pleasure. Like him, it has undergone an obscuration, not an extinction. And like him, an emergence and manifestation await it. He shall appear again, and it shall appear with him. One hour shall disclose both; and when he shall come again "a second time without sin unto salvation," that divine life, which, in all his true followers, begun on earth, made them on earth of heaven, hidden from mortal eyes, even before the earthly tabernacle, in which it tarried for a time, passed away from sight, shall come forth to view, and show to all observers its real nature, excellence and glory. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

In order to feel the force and propriety of the image,

we must consider what living is, and what dying is, to a man, in reference to objects out of himself. A man's life, in the most emphatic sense, is, where the objects are that occupy his attention, fill his thoughts, engage his affections, call forth his energies. A man's life may thus, in a most true and solemn sense, be more in another sphere, than in that which his person visibly inhabits. We speak of a man, whose conduct indicates that his soul is not employed about objects around him, but on others, which for the time have usurped their place and diverted his attention from them, as absent. We mean that the principal actings of his life are not where its apparent seat is, that the man is, where he is thinking, and not where he is breathing. And the wonderful power of the soul thus to abstract itself from surrounding objects, even to the extent of becoming unconscious of them, and to concentrate itself upon things remote and invisible, is taken as no mean proof of its immateriality and immortality.

There may be something like a permanent divorce of the soul from a set of objects which environ its local being; and there is such, when a set of objects more remote takes possession of it with such a force as to throw them down into a state of insignificance and unimportance. If his life is, where those things are that most engage and affect him, then, when such a transfer takes place, his life as to the one set of things ceases, and as to the other set of things begins: to the one he dies, to the other he is born. And though to the former he still continues to pay some inferior measure of regard, yet this, comparatively, may well be thrown out

of the account, and his life be regarded as comprised within the limits of those objects which have gained such a mastery over him, that all else is to him, in comparison, as "less than nothing and vanity."

Ye are dead, says the apostle. Ye have died. Ye were alive once, but ye are not so now. There was a time when the present world was the sphere, in which your life expended its powers, and on whose objects its energies were lavished. You felt yourself circumscribed within it. Its good was the good you sought. To it you looked for the sources of your happiness. On it you fastened your hopes. Your thoughts revolved within its precincts. On it your life fed, and to it your life was given. And thus to your life it gave the impress of itself, made it the reflection of its own image, instinct every where with its spirit, fashioned every where with its forms. Yours was a worldly life. Your life corresponded to the visible sphere it occupied; and thus was a thing which all within that sphere could perceive, comprehend, appreciate, measure. That life has ceased; another has taken its place. Your sphere has expanded, and so expanded, that that which was lately your all, is now a trifle, and receives a small part only of your care and effort. You have learned to look upon the things that are not seen, and live for them. A set of objects have been revealed to you, which, as they are of transcendent importance, have attracted to themselves your chief regard. Now the men about you take no cognizance of these things. They continue to see only that part of your life, which is not expended upon them, which, in comparison with the nobler life you are leading, is indeed no life at



all, a mere extinct and deserted life. That which is your life is utterly unknown to them, does not fall within the compass of their observation or comprehension. It is a hidden life. They do not see its sphere nor its actings. It is the office of death to render life invisible. It is so with natural death. The life of those who have died is not extinguished, but has passed into a condition of secrecy and concealment. The living know that it is, but they cannot find it. There are no signs of it in the statue-like corpse. In vain we hunt for it in the ashes of the grave. The spirit gives no token of its being. The life of the dead is to us voiceless, formless—real, but an impenetrable secret. So the change you have undergone may well be called a death; for that life to which death in the spiritual sense introduces men is a profound mystery to all who have not entered upon it. It is taken clean out of their sphere, and removed from their observation.

It is a hidden life, because, its objects are hidden. The objects of ordinary life are visible objects, such as the senses discern, and are equally open to the notice of men of all characters and all aims. The Christian shares the knowledge and use of them equally with the worldling. The life that is common to men "looks upon" the things that are seen." But the Christian looks upon "things that are not seen," and lives far more with reference to them than to any objects of sense. The world is around him, and presents to his notice its fulness, its beauty and its splendour, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life."

But to none of these is his attention principally given, his desires principally attracted, his efforts principally directed. And that is, because there are present to him other objects more excellent and attractive, which effectually eclipse and overpower them. Faith is to him another eye, with which he sees things that sense cannot discover. Its telescopic power brings near and sets before him a whole world of transcendent realities, of which it puts him, as it were, into possession, becoming to him "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." "His life is hid with Christ in God." It "entereth into that within the veil." The thoughts, affections, hopes, aims, purposes, are directed to those things, which that conceals from ordinary men. These are the things with which he is most familiar, which interest him most. "We are come," says the apostle, not we hope to come—we are come, "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel." These are the things with which we are conversant, which are realities to us, in view of which we live, which furnish our motives of action, which stir our hopes and fears, which arouse our exertions, which comfort us in sorrow, which fill our hearts with joy. We purpose and perform, we act and endure, "as seeing Him who is invisible." Our life is on high

with Christ in Him, and, not only with Christ, as it is in that sphere which Christ inhabits, but because of Christ, as he is the attractive principle that thus draws it up on high by the contemplation of his work and merits, his love and his loveliness,—“whom, having not seen,” that is with the eye of sense, “we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” These then are the things which the Christian is thinking, feeling, acting about. And these things the world does not see. It hears of them. Perhaps it credits them. But it is not conversant with them. They are not practical, influential realities to it. And hence, in as much as a man’s life, outwardly viewed, is in those things on which it feeds and to which it is given, the new life of the Christian is, to the world, a hidden life.

Equally is that life a hidden life in its actings. If a man’s life, outwardly viewed, is in those things about which he is thinking, feeling and acting, inwardly viewed, it is the thinking, feeling and acting. And this from the world is inviolably hidden. It may indeed be said, that thinking and feeling, the whole action of the soul, is necessarily hidden, because it is the action of an invisible substance, of which sense takes no cognizance. But the thinking and feeling, the spiritual action of one soul, is discoverable to another in the light of experience. That experience limits the discovery. The quality of religious thought and feeling is a thing unknown to a mind that is not itself religious. Words utterly fail to convey any just notion of it; for they are merely representatives of abstractions, which

are understood, only as they are realized in a personal appropriation. Who knows what repentance is, that has not repented? or faith, that has not believed? or love, that has not loved? I understand repentance, in my repentance; and faith, in my faith; and love, in my love. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Spirituality alone has the eye that can perceive and distinguish them. Thus we see, that the very substance of the Christian life is a thing unknown to the world. Much more, then, is its actual working in a given soul. How complete a secret indeed is a Christian man as he moves before his fellows, that inner world in which his true life is going on as much cut off from them as though it were removed at an infinite distance. Men look upon their fellow men, and though, at any given time, they cannot read their thoughts, they can divine them, by seeing what their outward occupation is, and judging how men so occupied would naturally think.

But the Christian has a line of thinking that is peculiar to himself, and which thus renders his inner and true life, an entirely different thing from the outward appearances under which it is going on; and there may be a whole liturgy of worship performed by him, while the secular guise that conceals it is all the world sees. His religion is not a thing of occasions, and he need not suspend his outward work for it. There it goes on in the temple of his soul, while the business of his temporal calling is proceeding on the visible surface of his existence. He prays and praises, he communes with

God, he seeks Christ's glory, he offers a tribute to God's authority, while he seems to be doing only some very common, ordinary matter. Oh! we know not what a beautiful world of holy hopes, heavenly aspirations, pure and fervid affections, thoughts of benevolence, purposes of usefulness, a piece of heaven upon earth, may be dwelling and moving by us unperceived, in the garb, it may be, of poverty and insignificance, in all its outward lowliness, a "life that is hid with Christ in God."

My dear brethren, let us apply this test fairly, faithfully, to our own spiritual condition. The life that ends in heaven is the life that borrows heaven to live in upon earth. Is ours such a life, a life that has its springs, resources, supports and objects in an unseen world, a life of faith, a life that looks to Christ living above, our Advocate and Mediator, a life that habitually recognises and resorts to a set of objects which are not perceived by our eyes, or any of our senses, and which is mingling, as with familiar realities, with the things of a blessed and holy eternity? If our life has no such element in it, what is our religion but a "form of godliness;" and in what will it end but in an awful and irreparable disappointment? If the germ of such a life be in us, let us seek to develop and expand it more and more. It is our happiness below, and the beginning and earnest of a far richer happiness hereafter.

And is not such a life desirable and attractive to all mortal men? Will it not awaken in all a desire and effort to obtain it? Who, in this scene of change and

uncertainty and decay, would not rejoice to connect himself with that which is immutable, steadfast and eternal? Nothing is of that nature here. How great a thing it is, to be independent of a world so full of perturbations and disruptions, of vicissitudes and losses and defeats! Who would not have something to live upon, and labour for, which can never fail, never deteriorate, never disappear? The Christian life gives this to us; it dwells in God, it has fellowship with Christ, it embraces eternity.

Ah! my dear brethren, do not grovel here. All here is unstable and perishing. The life that lives upon it is a miserable and most unfit life for an immortal being, the perversion and abuse of a most noble and glorious nature. Lay hold on Christ, and live for eternity; for "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God, abideth forever."

## SERMON XV.

## CHRISTIAN CONCENTRATION.

This one thing I do.—PHIL. III. 13.

SINGLENESS of aim and concentration of effort can alone give life, dignity and power. Great talents and great labours, consumed on a variety of separate and disconnected objects, fail of achieving effects commensurate with the ability and energy which they display, and seldom succeed in commanding the reverence and gratitude of men. The man who turns life to best account for himself and his fellows, is the man who does one thing, who, choosing for himself at the outset one line of action, usefulness and eminence, devotes all his energies to its prosecution, and, with unwavering constancy and steady perseverance, presses towards his mark. Such a man must have firmness and self-denial, resolution to forego many immediate advantages, tempting offers, specious allurements, forsake much good which life presents to his acceptance, and, for the sake of more effectually compassing and perfecting this one thing, leave undone many things which offer valuable returns, and turn his back, though it be with a sigh, on many openings that exhibit flattering prospects of pleasure and advantage. "Let thine eyes look right on," says the wise king of Israel,

“and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil:”—words, than which, even leaving out of view their spiritual application, none wiser or fitter were ever uttered to the sons of men. And yet this unity is not incompatible with a certain complexity, which unavoidably characterizes the composition of human life, a diversity of contribution and of ramification; as the tree is made up of many roots and many branches, yet has one trunk, in which all feeders end, and from which all outgrowths proceed. Religion is made up of parts; and there is much in life not immediately and directly religious, which yet is requisite not only to its completeness, but to its very being, and which religion, true and enlightened, will not allow us to omit or treat slightly. The unity of life only requires the studious rejection of all that does not in some way conduce to a common end or issue from a common source.

St. Paul tells us in the text that he did one thing, and by implication that he did but one thing. And yet St. Paul's was a life of multifarious activity. Few men spread their action over a broader surface, or apply it to a greater variety of particulars. He was in journeyings often, and extended his labours over almost all the then known world. A debtor to the Greeks and to the Jews, to civilized men and to barbarians, he was “all things unto all men, if by any means he might save some;” adapting himself to the condition of those with whom he had to do, with a facility truly remarkable.



We should say he was a man of wonderful adaptability and versatility, now expounding Moses and the prophets to his countrymen in their synagogues, now unfolding the religion of nature and quoting the heathen poets to the polished and philosophic Athenians, now teaching with all plainness of speech the principles of Christianity to "the barbarous people" of Melita. Nay, he was not always a preacher in any form; for he "laboured working with his hands," and wrought at one time, we know, at the occupation of a tent-maker. But he was always an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and he never forgot it. All he did was always subordinate to the design of that high office, and subservient, in some way, to the more effectual accomplishment of his work. So that he could say to others: "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus"—"Do all to the glory of God," without any fear that his own example would be quoted as a contradiction of his precept. This was the principle that cemented all the parts of his life into one, and gave it, with all its diversity of manifestation and performance, an essential consistency and oneness. By virtue of this, while he was in one sense, doing many things, he was in another and a higher, always doing one thing, because he was always serving God, and seeking to save his soul and do good to men. This was a work with him that never stood still, to which all he did was in some sense a contribution, of which all the particular acts, forms, occupations of his life, some more sacred, and some more secular, were but different effects and guises.

There are two ways, in which men may seek to give

their life a religious unity and concentration. The one is by the contraction of the secular, and the other is by the diffusion of the sacred. It may be admitted that there is room for both in a plan of Christian living; and yet we think, that a candid survey of the work which God assigns us, will satisfy us, that our wisdom and our welfare lie chiefly in the latter.

We have seen, that in order to have one end in life, and thus to give life itself that singleness which is requisite to the more effectual realization of its power and value, there must be firmness and self-denial. We must resolutely pass, and refuse to be attracted by, many things, which are goodly and advantageous in themselves, but which cannot be pursued, without diverting from our main object an amount of time and power, which is needful to its successful completion. A man, who has a journey before him sufficient to occupy a day, and only a day to perform it in, must not allow himself to turn aside, to pluck the flowers which grow by the wayside, or examine the green lanes that diverge from his track. If he loiters, to mineralize, and botanize, to saunter in cool shades, or rest by bubbling fountains, night will overtake him before his journey is ended. He may do anything, that will not interfere with his central purpose of finishing his journey in the time allotted, but nothing, that will consume the time, and waste the strength, which the completion of it demands. There must undoubtedly be contraction, in its measure, of attention and effort. No man, that would do the work of life well, must undertake to do all that offers to be done, or all, that, if done, would

seem to assure him of a valuable reward. The gain will be loss, if, in consequence, there is interruption of the main work, and the great object is sacrificed in any degree to the acquisition of the collateral advantage. And if the work of religion be chosen as the business of life, as by every being that is immortal it ought to be, then his efforts must be contracted so as to keep within the limits of his chosen business. Nothing must be undertaken or performed which will withdraw his energies from it, nothing which may not be made to contribute in some way to its execution. And doubtless, this will in every instance set limits to human desire and human exertion, and compel the man, who is sincere and earnest in his spiritual work, to refuse to do many things, not merely such, as are intrinsically sinful, but also such, as, innocent in themselves, will evidently tend to diminish his fervour and diligence in working out his salvation. To draw these lines with precision is impossible. Individual discretion must determine them. We can only say, that nothing can wisely be pursued by a religious man, which will not incorporate with his religion, nothing that will stand away from his life as a digression or set upon it as an excrescence.

The Bible is everywhere warning men against an undue and dangerous secularity. It tells men everywhere, who would seek to serve God, "not to be entangled in the affairs of this life." And every man who has ever undertaken to "live godly in Christ Jesus," in this present evil world, has felt the necessity of constant watchfulness, caution and self-restraint, not to

be drawn away from his great object by the claims of that which is specious, innocent or excellent, but cannot be pursued by him without trenching upon the paramount claims of God and eternity. There is, however, a danger on this side, a perversion of this important principle, into which men are liable to fall, and not unfrequently have fallen. Men, in seeking to be spiritual, sometimes seem to suppose that it is well to compress secular interest and attention into the narrowest possible limits, to do nothing of a worldly nature which they can avoid doing, and to devote as large a portion of their time as may be, to occupations which are directly and visibly religious. This first made men hermits. This, under a false view of the nature of religion, induced men to withdraw from those relations and posts which they were appointed to fill, to practise a rigid asceticism, to neglect the body, to make themselves exceptions and isolations in society, standing away from its interests, and contributing nothing to the sum of its happiness and improvement. Out of this false idea grew the whole monastic system, with its manifold mischiefs and abuses. And not a few, who are the readiest to condemn a monk, are guilty of a monk's mistake. All are, indeed, who find in religion an excuse for the neglect of the appropriate business of their stations, who let the work of that place which they fill in the social system go undone, while they are occupied in prayer, or listening to preachers, or labouring in popular schemes of charity, who are negligent husbands, wives, sons, daughters, tradesmen, artificers, because they are aiming to serve God. We do not be-

lieve that our Lord, when he reproved Martha, for being unreasonably "cumbered with much serving," would have commended Mary, for always sitting at his feet.

But Christian concentration, as we have observed above, lies less in abridging the amount of our secular engagements, than in widening the sphere of our spiritual action. There is such a thing as spiritualizing and sanctifying interests and employments which are outwardly and naturally worldly, so as to make them a part of our religion, to absorb them into our one work of seeking salvation, incorporate them into the service of God, so that the two may go on together harmoniously and without interference, and the whole life, animated by one spirit and directed by one design, be incessantly occupied in the execution of the only task which gives it real dignity, and value,—that of glorifying God, in order to enjoy him forever. If this is done, there need be no pauses in business for the accommodation of religious pursuits; for business itself is a religious pursuit. Specifically and peculiarly religious duties will have their place, and not be crowded out by attention to temporal interests; if they are, this attention is excessive, and there is call for the contraction of the secular of which we have spoken under the preceding head. But when they are performed, they give place to no cessation of the religious life, but only to a change of its form, which, when it ceases to act under its own special provisions and manifestations, adopts and consecrates the forms of common life, and thus moves on in an unbroken, continuous stream.

The way to do this is simple, and would be easy, were it not for our natural disinclination to spiritual pursuits, and the difficulty with which religion is familiarized in human souls. Nothing that is not intrinsically evil, or so excessive as to interfere with the appropriate duties of piety, is incapable of being made religious, and becoming a contribution to the work of salvation. All is, to infuse into it a religious motive, and look beyond its immediate result, to its remoter but more important influence on our eternal welfare, and be always purposing and aiming at this ultimate fruit. In this way, secular action, though it is not a native outgrowth of religion, becomes engrafted upon its stock, and imbued with its life and quality. And the true life of the soul will flow and move as freely in these adopted members as in those which it has put forth by its own natural tendency. The life is thus all hallowed; and obedience is easily attained to these precepts of the apostle,—“Whatsoever we do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him,”—“Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Two things we ought to keep in mind, the motive and its application.

The motive it is that gives any act its moral value, and that is its value in the sight of God. Hence it is, that “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” And hence the injunction, “Keep thy heart

with all diligence:" it is here that the true life is going on, and here that God is taking account of it for the day of judgment.

A man in an act or course of action may have two purposes, a nearer and a more remote. If he is a religious man, he will. And it is the remoter purpose that sanctifies the act or course, and incorporates it into his religious life. And thus the great variety of things which a man may be doing, in the secular view of his conduct, are all parts of that one thing, which alone constantly, unintermittingly he is doing, in a spiritual sense. An act or course of action has a proximate intent, which is visible to men,—a commendable or at least an innocent one it must be—as for instance, to support a family, to acquire a competency, to accumulate knowledge, to improve the mind, to obtain salutary recreation. But beyond this there may be another and better motive, which only God can see, as, to do the will of God, to advance his glory, to promote his cause, to honour Christ, recommend religion, benefit mankind spiritually, advance the soul in holiness and fitness for heaven, and co-operate with the grace of God in working out its salvation. And then the act, in all its apparent secularity, is as religious as a prayer, or a sacrament, or the hearing of a sermon, or the most devout and sacred aspirations of the spirit.

But we are to take care not only of the motive, but of its application. It is not enough to have adopted this motive as the ruling purpose of life. We must watch over its operation. It is not a motive that is natural to men, and therefore, it will not work, untended and

uncared for. We must take care that it does not slip away from us. We must be asking ourselves—we can hardly ask too frequently—whether it is in actual operation. We must be frequently giving it the fresh impulse of new resolves. We must be, as often as we conveniently can, giving it a separate application to our particular acts. We must be recalling ourselves to it, distributing it as minutely as we can to the details of our conduct, and endeavouring, as far as possible, to give it a conscious sway in our hearts, and an active control of our practice.



## SERMON XVI.

## THE TOUCH OF FAITH.

And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?—ST. MARK V. 30, 31.

OUR LORD was surrounded by a throng. He was going to the house of Jairus to heal his daughter; and a multitude of people, drawn by feeling or curiosity, or that vague and nameless impulse that sometimes draws together a crowd, accompanied him on his way. In the course of his walk, doubtless no small number of them, at one time or other, were brought into contact with his person. The company of a coarse and inquisitive rabble must have been annoying to his pure and refined spirit; but it drew forth from him no word of complaint or displeasure. Once only did he notice that any one had touched him; and that touch was gentle, brief, and, to ordinary sense, imperceptible. But he felt it so as he felt no other touch. It even drew virtue from him, virtue that wrought in that toucher an instantaneous and perfect cure. There was a certain woman in that throng, who came in the press behind and touched his garment, of purpose. It was no rude grasp or prolonged pressure. It was soft and momentary, but it was full of meaning and of efficacy.

Others touched him carelessly and accidentally. She touched him purposely and reverently. She came to touch him. That was the sole purpose of her presence, and in it the full object of her approach was disclosed and fulfilled. She had not come to look upon him, nor to see what he would do. She was actuated by no idle curiosity, nor by that vacant sympathy, or meaningless compliance with the impulse of a crowd, which often carries men with others they know not why. She came to touch him. That was her express and exclusive business; and when it was performed, the whole design of her visit was manifested and completed. And though it was the lightest and the quickest touch of all that he experienced in his way to the house of Jairus, the most secret and retiring, he felt it most, and noticed it alone. Nay, it seems as though it was the only case of contact that he called a touch. Jesus turned him about in the press,—notice, it was a press,—his companions kept at no respectful distance from him,—and said, Who touched my clothes? The question puzzled and astonished his disciples. He almost seemed to them to trifle. “Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee; and sayest thou, Who touched me?” And Jesus, not noticing their surprise, or heeding their implied correction, quietly rejoined, “Somebody hath touched me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.” Ah! there was something in this woman’s touch that made it peculiar indeed, a touch in no common sense, a touch that extracted virtue, a touch that Jesus answered by a putting forth of that

power that was in him for the relief of human trouble, that called into action his dormant authority, that set free his latent divinity. For, we do not suppose that virtue went forth from him involuntarily and unintentionally, in answer to this woman's touch. His question was not intended for investigation, but for manifestation, not to detect the person who had drawn a blessing from him by stealth, but to display the person, to whose faith he had accorded a prompt and willing recompense, to the knowledge and admiration of the bystanders. Not because Jesus did not know her, did he inquire her out, but because the men that were with him did not know her, and because he would not suffer her to lose the honour, nor them the benefit, which the manifestation of her faith and its success might yield. She was a diseased woman, and she had been a great sufferer for many years. She had impoverished herself in fruitless endeavours to obtain relief. Still her painful and loathsome malady clung to her. She had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any. "She was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." Human help was vain. From ordinary means she had ceased to hope for deliverance, and saw no refuge from her misery but the grave. But now Jesus came that way,—the true, the infallible, the divine Physician. She heard, she saw, his miracles of love and power. No evil defied his skill, or failed of his compassion. He was even then going on an errand of mercy at the call of suffering and sorrow, to stand by the bed-side of a dying girl, and speak back to life the perished hope of moaning hearts. An

only daughter lay a dying, nay, was even now dead, for such was the second message that met him on the way, and he was going to recall her to life and give her sorrowing parents "beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning." The poor victim of distress saw the passing multitude, and mingled in it. She made her way through the crowd till she stood in the immediate presence of the wonderful Healer. With a mixture of awe and hope, of faith and timidity, she came behind him. She did not present herself to his view or seek his observation. But she put forth her feeble and shrunken hand, and touched the hem of his robe. It was all she dared to do, and it was enough. He saw her with the eye of his Divinity. He saw the working of her thoughts. He knew all that was in her heart. She touched, and immediately she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. Now, doubtless, there were in that crowd others besides this woman, who were labouring under the ills of the flesh, and were so far fit subjects for the exertion of Christ's healing power; and of them others, as well as she, were brought into contact with his person. She only was healed. They carried away their maladies as they brought them.

It was then no magical power in his flesh, or in his garment, or in her touch, that wrought this cure. It was accomplished by no blind efficacy, as of a charm or talisman, nor by any capricious going forth of the virtue that resided in him. It was effected by the co-operation of his will and her will, of her will in touching, and of his will in according to her touch the benefit

it sought. She might have touched him accidentally, ever so often, as others about him did, and remained as little profited as they. And she might have touched him purposely, and if he had not heeded her touch, or had seen fit not to vouchsafe it a gracious answer, she would have gone away still the prey of a deadly ailment. It was not the medicinal quality of his clothes or of his flesh that restored her to soundness, but the free, conscious action of his intelligent mind and compassionate heart. The touch and the garment were but outward signs and vehicles of the inward, invisible working of her soul and his, which by them found expression, and sensible testification to the eyes of men.

Not the touch, but the spirit of the touch, was her qualification to be healed; and not the garment, but the sovereign, merciful power of him whom it invested, was the efficacious instrument of her restoration; and yet that spirit might have been ineffectual, and that power inefficacious, but for that outward action on her part, which elicited the answering action on his, that brought to her so rich a blessing. Now, the spirit that wrought in her touch and gave it value was faith; and it was this in her that the Saviour saw and accepted and rewarded: a rude, ignorant faith it may have been; for we have no reason to suppose, that she had attained to a very distinct, accurate, complete knowledge of his nature and mission and office. But it was sincere, real, earnest, practical. All she had opportunity to know she believed, and that not as theory, but as an incentive and encouragement of action. It

led her to him. It persuaded her to touch him. Ah! such faith, in all its dimness and rudimental character, was worth more than the most exact and elaborate orthodoxy, nicely chiselled as the marble of Phidias, and as cold. It drew forth her soul in trust and endeavour. There was vitality to it; and it wrought savingly. It was "precious faith;" the Saviour of men put honour upon it, accorded to it an abundant recompense. It was the perception of this in her that called his power into action for her relief; and, to display it and make it honourable in the eyes of men, and commend it to their approval and imitation, did he afterwards inquire after her, and drew her out from the crowd in which she had modestly concealed herself: and then, "the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her," agitated with gratitude and alarm at the thought of her boldness and success and exposure, "came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth;" and he soothed her with benignant words, and "said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." This detection and manifestation were not designed to make her a trophy, so much as to set her forth as an example and a pattern, which, in all subsequent ages, might induce and embolden men to come to the same almighty and exhaustless fountain of strength and love, for nobler benefits and more exalted mercies.

For, be it remembered, that our Lord came not in the character of a physician of men's bodies, but as a healer of their souls. What he did for the relief of their physical distress was but incidental and second-

ary. It was to commend himself to their faith as "the author of eternal salvation," that he vouchsafed to become the ready and compassionate helper of their temporal distresses. For this cause, "he went about doing good and healing all them that were oppressed with the devil." His kindness to the bodies of men was but a sort of type and earnest of what he would do for their souls. Oh! it was not to save their perishable bodies from going down to their bed of dust a little sooner, or to relieve them during their sojourn from a few transient pangs and inconveniences, that he came on earth and dwelt among men; but to save imperishable souls from ruin, and rescue the immortal spirits of men from "the bitter pains of eternal death." And here it is, that the narratives of his wonderful works of mercy upon earth become to us so full of interest and instruction, as they shadow out to us those nobler works of spiritual mercy, which form the peculiar object and business of his mission.

And it is delightful to know, moreover, that in this his more special and appropriate work, he yet dwells on earth and vouchsafes his presence to men. To this end it is not needful that he should move visibly along our streets and corporeally visit our dwellings. Oh! no. In this he may be present, and working simultaneously at opposite ends of the earth, in all latitudes, and in all lands which the sun visits in his daily circuit. For this purpose he is here to-day, as well as in the sunny plains of India, and in the dreary wastes of the frozen zones. He is not very far from any one of us; for he has said to his ministers, "Lo! I am with you alway,

even to the end of the world," and to the body of his Church, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Oh yes, he is as truly in the midst of this assembly, as he was in that that pressed upon his steps as he went to the house of Jairus, with as compassionate a heart, with as quick discernment, with as effectual power. He is here as a healer; and we are all a company of diseased and dying sinners, who have as great need of healing as the woman, and who, if we have not been to him, have spent our money and time in efforts to obtain healing from others, as fruitlessly. We are nothing bettered, but have rather grown worse. To us, other healers are "physicians of no value;" for their knowledge and their power reach not to such maladies as ours. Yes, here we are, and He in the midst of us, touching him all, the most part, it is to be feared, as thoughtlessly and unconsciously and uselessly as those did who carelessly jostled him when he walked over the high-ways of Palestine. And there are among us, it is trusted, at least a few, who touch him of purpose, who have come to touch him, who touch him with the touch of faith, who with deep abasement and trembling hope, are laying hold upon the hem of his garment, and crying in the depth of their souls, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon us!" And oh! let not one such doubt that on their timid approach he turns a benignant smile, that there goeth forth virtue from him and healeth them, that he speaks to them in words of condescension and welcome, "Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole from thy plague;" for he hath said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no



wise cast out." Yes, if we have come hither weighed down with a sense of unworthiness and weakness, whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be, if our hearts are sore and aching with afflictions and losses, if we are weary of the world, and long to find some strong and steadfast resting-place for our fainting spirits, behold, he stands in our midst and cries, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Whether we are benefited by being here or not, depends all on the working of our hearts, whether they are recognising him, applying to him, resting upon him, drawing near to him with a living, contrite, earnest faith, to ask of him "those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul."

You see then, my beloved brethren, how the view into which we have been drawn, of this affecting incident of our Lord's life, answers the purpose of a very clear and solemn discrimination, how it sorts us into two classes, and tells us, if we will heed its teaching, unequivocally, to which of these classes we belong.

Of the crowd that followed Jesus by the way, a great number received from him no benefit at all. For it was not the being where he was, nor the being near him, nor the being thrust into casual contact with his garments or his flesh, that did men good. There was no mysterious influence encircling him, that shed blessings on all men who came within its sphere, nor any medical virtue in his person or in his raiment, that wrought miracles of healing by their touch. The

multitude that had been around him went away with their maladies uncured, unmitigated. There was but one indeed whose contact he would call a touch, for in one only was there more than the contact of matter with matter, even the commerce of soul with soul. Mental eyes did not make the discrimination: even the eyes of disciples did not. It is so even now, for we cannot tell in our assembly who they are that are coming to Christ in faith; but it shall be told of us in the end, as it was of the woman. It is not our being here, our having to do here with prayer books, and postures, and sermons, and the bread and wine, and the water in the font, that will do us any good. These are but the visibilities of Christ's presence in his church, the raiment in which he shows himself to the eyes of our flesh. If we come with any hope of good merely from coming, while we have no deep sense of want, and no lively resort to him for its supply, it is but superstition. We shall go as we came, and Christ shall profit us nothing. So is it with all careless and heartless coming into the presence of Christ.

But there was one in the crowd who touched him with the touch of faith, and who was turned into a new creature. She passed from death unto life. She was bidden to go in peace, and the long absent flow and vigour of health were felt in all her frame. Notice, how this faith of hers, which made her approach to Him so beneficial, operated. She did not despise the outward, while she employed the inward. She did not stand proudly or skeptically aloof, as though she were to have relief by mere feeling and believing. She

used visible means. She approached him corporeally and touched the hem of his garment; but there was a living faith in the touch, and this drew forth the living power that healed her. A naked faith had done her no good. An unbelieving touch had done her no good. The touch of faith healed her. Oh! what a lesson is here. Here we are to-day by Christ's appointment to meet him, and he is visibly represented to us in his ordinances. But thoughtless, unfeeling, skeptical minds will get no good from them. And yet, ordinarily, the faith that neglects them proves itself spurious and insufficient. But is there one here in the presence of Christ's own ordinances and means of salvation, mighty to save, who is sorrowful and needs a comforter? Let him touch the Redeemer's robe with humble faith, and healing virtue shall come forth to assuage his sorrows and bind up his broken heart. Above all, is there one here who is touched with a sense of sin, who feels it a burden and a curse, who knows not how to rid himself of its guilt and tyranny, who cannot do the things that he would? There is one here that can help and save. Touch him, touch him with an humble and undoubting faith. His healing virtue shall answer to your touch. His gracious voice shall whisper, "Go in peace; be whole of thy plague."

## SERMON XVII.

## ANOTHER HEART.

And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.—1 SAMUEL X. 9.

BUT not a *better* heart. Nothing in his subsequent history indicates that. Another heart is not then necessarily “a new heart,” in the spiritual sense of that term. Saul’s interview with Samuel had wrought a great and sudden change in his *outward* condition. It had transformed him from a rustic stripling, a raw country lad, into a king. It appears from the text, that a correspondent *internal* change accompanied the alteration. He found himself suddenly fitted for the new place to which Providence had summoned him. In this there was nothing magical or extraordinary. It is indeed said, that God gave him another heart, but we are not to understand the words as indicating a divine operation independent of outward means and natural influences, or at all distinguishable, in the consciousness of its subject, from the effects of external circumstances. It is not more true, that the man makes the place, than that the place makes the man. Both, indeed, are most pregnant and concerning truths. Saul, transplanted into a new station, brought into new relations to life and society, felt the simultaneous up-

springing within him of sentiments and purposes suited to his position, and became conscious of capabilities which had before lain dormant, and might have always remained so, but for this transformation of his outward state. Made a king, he became kingly. His soul expanded to the horizon of his new dignity and office. He felt within him the working of thoughts and feelings appropriate to them. A sense of novel responsibilities, aspirations, capacities, purposes, sprang up in his bosom. There was a development of powers needful to his work. And he who went forth to seek his father's asses, with no higher thoughts than those which fitted his obscure position and humble errand, went home with a mind full of the germinating seeds of high purposes, mighty deeds, and glorious achievements. Poor Saul! His story is full of melancholy interest and monitory instruction. If, when there came to him another heart, there had also been given him a new and better heart, how different might have been his career. Then, would there have been honour, where there is only disgrace. Then, might he have left his name for a word of blessing, instead of a curse unto God's chosen. But, alas! there was no spiritual element in his change, and, therefore, it yielded no happy fruit to him, or to the church of God. It was but the direction of the same earthly mind to larger objects, grander schemes, a wider range. It yielded no better results than a mad ambition, a frantic jealousy, a life of torture, and a death of disgrace.

We may properly take occasion from this case, to discriminate between certain other changes to which

the spirit of man is subject, and that great spiritual change which alone affects him savingly, planting in him the germ of holiness and immortal felicity; or to point out the difference between another heart and a new heart.

And, first, I will direct your attention to the nature and effects of spurious religious excitement. You will observe that I say nothing against excitement, whether solitary or social; but only point you to some mischievous effects which are incident to it, and which not unfrequently are actually developed in connexion with it. There is excitement almost necessarily in the serious and earnest contemplation of religious truth. Its revelations are fitted to stir the spirit of man deeply; the interests to which it pertains are too momentous to be contemplated without emotion. They address themselves powerfully to the imagination; and through it, act upon our physical nature, and stir our animal sensibilities. The effect is heightened by society. The nature of men is sympathetic. Hence feeling is contagious, and not only so, but excitement, where it exists already, rises, by the reacting influence of those who come within its sphere and imbibe its infection. But excitement is bounded by limits fixed in the constitution of our nature; and when these are reached, a revulsion takes place, which issues either in stagnation, or in a new excitement of a different description. The mind sinks from terror into apathy; or else shifts its view and becomes agitated with a new set of emotions suited to its new discoveries, when distress gives place to transport, alarm to assurance,

and entreaties to grateful songs. And when these opposite emotions are produced by religious causes, they are thought to indicate a work of the Spirit and involve conversion. And we do not say that there may not be a work of the Spirit involved in them, and the germ of a new life implanted under them. But we do say, that necessarily, they indicate no more than the spontaneous action of the mind, seeking relief after intense and finally intolerably painful direction to the frowning and terrific aspect of truth, in looking with a proportionate intensity and delight at its more inviting and consolatory features. It is quite remarkable, how little the moral and truly spiritual nature of man may have to do with such a process, how little of anything else there may be in it beside imagination and nervous sensibility. And yet, on the strength of it, a man often accounts himself a new man; and, whether he be right in that judgment or not, not unfrequently, he thereupon becomes and permanently remains another man. His life henceforward assumes a new bent. He adopts new opinions, he talks a new language, he affects new associates, he frequents new walks, he lends himself to the promotion of new interests. And yet he is not a new man. Only his outward life has taken a new impress, as Saul's did, in which the same worldly spirit finds a concealment and disguise. He has, in the apt language of the parable, "no root in himself;" and so his superficial change soon disappears, or else continues in the mechanical life-long working out of a false supposition. When the mind is for a considerable time together directed

to the contemplation of the Divine Being, and excluded from the operation of causes and circumstances which makes it conscious of its opposition to the divine will, there will, after a struggle, more or less prolonged with habitual fear and repugnancy, oftentimes spring up a sentiment of admiration and delight, easily mistaken for that true love of God, which also includes an acquiescence in his will and a conformity to his requirements.

But when the man returns to the ordinary business of life, and the will of God comes to him in the practical demands of duty, he may find that his old aversion to restraint and obedience remains unaltered; that the vision he has had of a celestial beauty has no power to sweeten life's task; and that he has not attained to true liberty, which lies in a doing of the will of God from the heart. It is an aspect of God and not God himself that he has fallen in love with, and an aspect which will not carry its sweetness with it to those other aspects which ordinary life forces him to behold. And yet, carried away by the delusion, that what he once felt so vividly was a true turning "from darkness unto light and from the power of Satan unto God," he continues to feed upon it, and goes on his way in a course of irregular and cheerless submission to disagreeable restraints and wearisome and distasteful services, bound upon him by consistency with his supposed conversion, and needful to the maintenance of his hope and self-complacency.

There is another very different transformation to which men are subject, which yet is of no greater



value; and tends to no better results,—that which is brought about by the slow operation of time and the gradual alteration of outward circumstances. The lesson of life is a sobering lesson. The fire of youth burns out as the period of youth expires. The world betrays its emptiness and mendacity. Time brings the disappointment of failure, and the worse disappointment of success. A thousand bright hues, which the future wears to the ardent and sanguine, fade away as they advance, and the prospect of the wayfarer grows every day more dingy and sombre. There are a thousand things which he meant to be or to get, which he is forced to yield up the hope of becoming or possessing. Every day some leaf falls from the flower he is seeking to grasp. Continually the stern hand of irresistible Providence shuts up some avenue that allures his steps. But the worst disappointment, as I have already hinted, is that which waits upon success,—the bitter pain of finding a thing, when it is gotten, not worth the pains of getting. And who does not find his expectations illusory in this way, and feel the application to himself of the prophet's saying: "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside." The result is a failure, to a sad degree, of earthly hope. Life loses its gayety as it moves on. It becomes graver, quieter, more thoughtful and serious,—not always indeed and invariably, for there are those whose frivolity clings to them to the end of life,—but often and naturally. And yet this sober spirit may be full of bitterness and discontent and envy, utterly devoid of all resignation towards God, or charity towards men.

Sometimes there is but a change of follies and vices, the substitution of a calmer and more private form of sensuality or dissipation for another of a more boisterous and public character; but the impress of sin and worldliness remains, and is too visible to allow the supposition of any moral improvement. It may be, that the life, never stained with any flagrant violations of propriety and virtue, has attained a form of irreproachable decorum, or, if less incorrupt at first, has shaken off its blemishes, and stands forth a pattern of decency and exact morals.

The result of time upon human character is very various, yet it seldom fails in one way or another to be evident and marked, and among persons whose course is not an abandoned one, is generally distinguished by a nearer approximation to the apparent effects of religion; and thus few men live on over the meridian of life without coming to have another heart, one which, in many instances, it may not be very difficult for themselves or others to mistake for a new and a better heart. And we are very far from doubting, that in not a few cases, the impression is not a mistake, that disappointment and decay do lead the soul to seek "the true riches," that the heart does turn from its "broken cisterns that can hold no water" to "the fountain of living water." God works a spiritual change along with and by means of that natural change which experience and the progress of the physical constitution bring. But to have become disgusted with the world, ceased to relish its pleasures, and attained a more even, sedate, steady temper of mind and habit

of life, is not necessarily to have drawn any nearer God, or become meet for life eternal. There may be as unspiritual and worldly a frame beneath these, as under his previous fashion of life. And even where religion seems to mingle in the result, it may be only a taking on of its forms, without the feeling of its power, or the love of its duties, an enforced preparation for a dread event impending, or a resort to it as the solace of vacant and heavy-hanging hours, the varnish that sanctifies an unconquered idolatry or an unsubmissive and rebellious heart, or the penance that painfully expiates the faults and follies of happier days.

A mere sobering of a man then, even though it be recommended by a tincture of religious feeling and observance, may as little prove him the subject of a true renewing in the spirit of his mind, as that change in his habits of thought and action which comes as the fruit of high excitement and sudden revulsion of feeling.

What, I said, may be wanting in either of these, is a spiritual element; and as the absence of this fatally vitiates these cases, and every other case where it appears, so its presence in either of them, or in any other change which the soul of man may undergo, declares the work to be of God, and furnishes a true mark of meetness for life eternal. Let us then look a little at this as it stands contradistinguished from all alterations, whose seat is either the imagination or the outward deportment, whose affinity to religion is limited to a certain accidental coincidence or similarity in some particulars, and whose religious phases are con-

fined to the inferior and superficial portion of human nature. Real religion takes hold of the deep principles and affections of the soul, and through them corrects and spiritualizes the tenor of the outward practice. For the sake of making my meaning more plain, I will run the doctrine out into a few particulars.

And first, look at this change in reference to the effect upon the heart of the grand and peculiar features of the Gospel. An irreligious mind has either no clear or definite views of the scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ; or if it comprehends it intellectually, and is able to think and speak of it with a scientific precision, it does not perceive and feel its fitness and necessity. It wears an arbitrary appearance. It does not seem to be an emanation of Divine wisdom, but a creation of Divine power, and it views it as a system which is to be admitted and conformed to, because it bears upon it the signature of Divine authority, rather than welcomed and admired, for its infinite suitableness and perfect adaptation to the condition of man and its own felt necessity. The Gospel is unreal to it. But with the rise of spiritual affections the film is cleared away. The truths of the Gospel come forth from their obscurity and vagueness, and the heart at once learns what they are, loses its indifference to them, appreciates their value, loves them, and lives upon them. I do not say that all this is done at once. The development may be very gradual. But whenever there is this spiritual enlightenment, and the soul begins to have insight into and interest in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, it is begun, and savingly begun.

Take, for instance, such a simple formulary of belief as the Apostles' Creed, and see how the up-springing of a spiritual faith will turn it from a congeries of cold facts or ill-understood words, into a system of living and life-giving verities. The mind that feels that "it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and turns to it, in its aching sense of want and unworthiness, as to the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land," is not only "not far from the kingdom of God," but is certainly within its precincts. Oh! let not any heart here, that feels its need of a Redeemer and thanks God for the gift of one, deem itself destitute of the grace of God, or cut off from any hope or privilege of the Gospel.

Look, secondly, at this change in respect to the power and influence of the divine will upon the soul. The spirit of religion is an obedient spirit. The spirit of irreligion is a disobedient spirit. Not that the irreligious man is necessarily at least in the outward aspect of his life a disobedient man. Nay, so far as literal conformity is concerned, his obedience may be as punctilious and thorough as that of the saint. But then his conformity is either accidental or constrained. Neither of these indicates a principle of obedience, an inward conformity. If a child pursue a course of conduct coincident with its parent's will purely for its own gratification, that is not obedience; or if it complies with his commands simply from fear of punishment, that is not obedience. Man's eyes may not distinguish it from obedience, but it is not obedience. Obedience requires a filial and submissive heart. When

then there springs up in the soul a real desire to know the will of God and to conform to it, a sincere disposition and purpose to do the behests of its Father in heaven, from the persuasion and sense that God is good and his will good and acceptable and perfect, Oh! there is "the spirit of adoption that cries Abba, Father." Weak, tottering it may be, but it is real, and is the beginning of salvation. There is the recognition of a new authority, the acknowledgment of a new rule. The man does the same act for a different reason. Oh! my dear brethren, whoever of you is cherishing a sincere desire, and putting forth a hearty endeavour, to serve God, is surely beginning to be a new man, is gaining an emancipation from the power of that "spirit who worketh in the children of disobedience."

Look, thirdly, at this change as it affects a man's view of eternity. The view of the worldly man is comprised within the bounds of time. If he ever looks beyond it, it is with a stealthy and uneasy glance. Here centre his hopes, his aims, his interests. Here he has taken up his rest, and on what he finds here he reposes his affections and expends his energies. All beyond is a dark chasm, peopled only with phantom shapes, and filled with shadows and unsubstantial objects. There is a quickening of that man's spiritual nature to whom eternity comes forth out of this vague and unreal condition, and becomes a near and interesting reality, full of interests for which he would fain make provision, to be habitually borne in mind and cared for, to secure the benefit of which he counts it a privilege to live and labour. Where the thought of

eternity takes possession of the mind, and becomes an influential consideration, a motive of self-denial and exertion, there is an escape from the grovelling spirit of the world, there is a looking upon the things that are not seen, a walking by faith and not by sight. True, the apprehension of eternity may be faint and fluctuating. The obtrusive world may often crowd before it, and obscure the spiritual vision. But the sense of immortality remains. The interests of another world are kept in view. There is an habitual intention to regard them and care for them. And the abiding impression of the soul is that here we are strangers and pilgrims, and have no continuing city, but seek one to come.

Ah, brethren, where such thoughts of Christ and duty and the unseen world, have arisen in the soul, God hath given not only another, but a new and better heart, and begun a good work which he is pledged to carry on unto the day of Jesus Christ.

## SERMON XVIII.

## UNCLOTHED AND RECLOTHED.

Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. —2 Cor. v. 23.

THE apostle, then, does not account this flesh of ours, which we so dote upon and pamper, as any part of ourselves. It is but a garment; we may lay it aside, and yet the integrity of our being and life remain unimpaired. Death is but the unclothing of the man, the passing into a state of temporary nudity, which we look upon with apprehension, perhaps, chiefly because of its strangeness and contrariety to our present habits and sentiments, in consequence of which, it seems to us, it may be, very erroneously, a condition of deprivation and disadvantage. But the raiment that we lay aside is in due time to be replaced by a vesture which is to be purer, more excellent and glorious. Meanwhile, life continues, divested of none of its essential attributes, hindered in none of its characteristic functions. The stream of life runs on through all these changes in a continuous and unbroken flow. The body is but the garment of the soul, as the clothes we wear are the garments of the flesh. They differ, as to their relations to that which constitutes our proper selves, but as outer and inner attire. The one we



change often, and frequently put on and off, lay aside and replace at the bidding of our own caprice or fancy or convenience. The other we change once for all, when God wills, putting it off then, that we may put it on again renovated and improved to wear it eternally. Disembodying as little interrupts the continuity of our being as undressing; and all that constitutes our true life is as little hurt by our lying down in our graves as by our lying down in our beds. The recollection of this is a proper and wholesome habit of mind. It cools the fever of earthly desire and hope, and lifts us up to an impressive and practical sense of our spiritualness and immortality. It makes us feel that what is material, visible and bodily, is not all that is real about us, nay, that this is far less real than that which is hidden beneath these temporal and temporary habiliments. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

We then,—this is the great central truth to be borne in mind in the discussion of this subject—are altogether separate and distinct from any form or description of material structure, with which we may be at one time or another associated. Such association, then, is but an accident of our being, not essential to it, is temporary, is not so intimate, as, while it lasts, to create an absolute dependence, nor, upon its cessation, to destroy or interrupt our existence. We may live in the flesh; we may live out of the flesh; or we may live in some organism different from the flesh. The existence of the being, man is no more implicated in the fate of his body, than that of his body is in the fashion and tex-

ture of his garments. Man is man, roaming unclothed, wrapped in furs, or arrayed in the elaborate and variable attire which marks the taste, the ingenuity or the caprice of civilized life. In all these various guises he is the same soul in the same fleshly covering. We live associated with matter in different degrees of proximity. There is the whole external world, the solid earth beneath, the overarching heavens above, in some sense, our abode; there is that portion of it which we call our country, and within that, the city or town that we inhabit; there is the structure whose walls and roof form our ordinary shelter from the elements, the house we live in, in a stricter sense, our home; there are the fabrics wrought by human skill and industry into forms of comfort, convenience and beauty, which constitute our raiment; and closest and innermost of all is the flesh itself, fashioned by almighty power and wisdom, "fearfully and wonderfully made," with its rich furniture of means fitted to the various purposes of sensation and action which pertain to corporeal existence. To this nearest materiality the life of the being is imparted so as to make it in a lower sense live also. Yet this is not the man, save by a metonymy, just as we call a family, a house. That, dwells within, as that central essence, which, all that is material, with successive removes of distance and relationship, enwraps and surrounds.

And if we are wont, in our common habits of thought, to account that inner layer of matter which constitutes the body or the flesh, part of ourselves, and dignify it with the titles and honours of humanity; it is only

because by closer union with it, it has acquired a portion of its properties; because in anything we see or know of life, it forms its invariable and indispensable instrument of manifestation, communication and action; and because in all our experience and observation, we see humanity in that permanent connexion with it which it has with nothing else that is material. And yet what is the permanency of three score years and ten to an immortal being? All is an illusion. A savage, who for the first time saw a man in clothing, might count his raiment a part of himself, because in his brief experience of civilized man he had never seen him without it. Our experience of humanity in the flesh is brief, quite too brief to be a criterion of judgment in regard to its relation to flesh, or its capacity of existing without it. Inspiration rises above such hasty inductions, and teaches us a truer philosophy of man. It calls his flesh, his clothing or his house, borrowing for illustration two of those other surroundings of matter which stand in the next two degrees of proximity to him. The eyes are windows, while the perceptive faculties that espy external nature through them, are "they that look out of the windows." The mouth is "the door of the lips;" and the hands are "the keepers of the house." So again, we are said to be briefly clothed in these perishable bodies, temporarily wrapped about with these fleshly habiliments. Soon we are to be denuded of them, and live, in some mysterious way, divested alike of their incumbrance and their ministration. And hereafter we are to be clothed anew in that unknown substance, which they intimate to us under the to us

strangely paradoxical title of "a spiritual body," and describe to us, under the analogy of that, which only serves to exalt our hopes without illuminating our conceptions, as the likeness of the "glorious body" of our Lord. And thus it disposes the whole history of humanity, into the three successive stages, of its being clothed, unclothed and re clothed.

We are first, clothed. We come into this world enveloped in flesh, and we abide in the flesh while we continue in the world. This is our state of mortality, that is, a state in which we are subject to death, always liable to death and exposed to death, in which symptoms of mortality and tendencies to dissolution continually remind us that we are appointed to die, and render us, through our unconquerable repugnance to that our inevitable destiny, "all our life time subject to bondage." This fleshly covering of ours is alive only by its alliance with spirit, an alliance which is forced and unnatural, and against which it seems as it were to be ever rebelling, and by unequivocal signs to assert its independence. Yet, through this flesh, while we live in it, we almost exclusively know life, its sense and organs alone give us access to the external world, whence we are to draw pleasure and improvement. The most spiritual acts of which we are now capable are in no inconsiderable measure from this cause carnalized. Thought and feeling in their freest and purest forms never rise wholly above the influence of the body, and are entirely free from the stain and tincture of the flesh.

We know not very well where lie the lines that separate the animal from the spiritual, the instinctive from

the rational. The most spiritual ideas, we entertain and express only in terms drawn from the properties and affections of matter; and these metaphors more or less discolour and distort their subject by importing into them qualities derived from material analogies. Language enters into all our mental operations; and we welcome it as a help, for it not only brings us the chief part of our knowledge, but thought, in minds so modified as ours are by their connexion with matter, without it must be vague and indefinite. But yet, as language is a bodily thing, expressed by bodily organs, addressed to bodily senses, drawing its terms from the perceptions and appearances of nature, when it becomes the instrument of thought, it carries with it into the mind the images of the world it comes from; our thinking is but an imagined hearing and uttering, and our most abstract mental operations retain a strong infusion of matter through that semi-corporeal faculty of speech by which alone they are carried on.

There can be no question that flesh and spirit in their present state of alliance very thoroughly interpenetrate one another; that they not only are together, but act on one another to extensively modify and influence each other's properties and operations. And yet we have always a consciousness more or less distinct of their distinctness; that they might be disengaged without destroying our existence or identity; that we might be and do without our bodies but not without our spirits; that their connexion is contingent and not necessary; that it might cease and we survive. We have ever a dim sense that our bodies are not ourselves, but our spirits are; that in these latter our proper

personality and identity reside; that spirit is man; that it has gathered to it flesh only as a temporary and accidental appendage and apparel; and that death is not our destruction but the putting off our mortal bodies. This seems to be a natural sentiment of humanity; at any rate it seems to have been well nigh universal in time and place; and it is, I take it, nothing but the soul's own consciousness of its spirituality and independence of matter, obscured and deadened by the circumstances of its present condition, but not obliterated or wholly stifled. It comes to the mind sometimes like a dream of former days, or an indistinct memory of a state that has passed away, haunting the soul with a feeling that it was before it clothed itself in flesh, which is in fact nothing but the sense of what it is—a thing different from flesh and capable of living without it—disguising itself in the semblance of a seeming recollection of what it has been.

We are next, unclothed. This is the second stage in the history of humanity. It constitutes the state of death. To this we are rapidly hastening. On every side of us are tokens of its approach. Within us are constantly symptoms and premonitions of our approach to it. "We have the sentence of death in ourselves." Our raiment of flesh is corruptible, and falls continually to decay. Time and the needful wear of existence waste and enfeeble it. Disease weakens its power of action and capacity of endurance. Calamity brings upon it sudden demolition. "We dwell in houses of clay, and are crushed before the moth." "When thou with rebukes dost chasten man for sin, thou makest his beauty to consume away like as it were a moth fretting a

garment." A moth fretting a garment! meet, descriptive emblem of human decay! This curious and beautiful frame, on which the resources of almighty wisdom, power and goodness have been so lavishly expended, to make it a comely and convenient abode of its honourable tenant, like the fabrics of human art that wrap it round, wears out, and is laid aside as a forsaken vesture. Then, "the dust returns to the earth as it was," and the honoured and pampered flesh says "to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister." Then we become unclothed. We lose the garments in which we have been accustomed to be arrayed, and make some sort of shift to live without them. We become disembodied, naked spirits. Our bodies die, not we.

This figure of unclothing is extremely expressive. It indicates our entire separateness from this present bodily organization. Take it away, and we remain still our perfect, unimpaired selves, we lose nothing that pertains to our proper being. Its integrity is still complete and unharmed. It has undergone no mutilation or reduction. It has been deprived of nothing that was not, while it was possessed, barely a circumstance and an appendage, and that if it seem to be necessary to well-being if not to being, may seem so only from the absence of all experience of the contrary. A savage finds the clothing of the civilized man as much a discomfort to him, as the civilized man the nudity of the savage. We are greatly prone to dread and disparage any experience which is contrary to our own, and the more, the wider the remove from it. But as we know that undressing takes away no organ or fa-

culty of the body, so unbodying destroys no function or talent of the soul. And a man disembodied is a man still, even as a man unclothed is a man still. But what is this second stage of human progress? this naked, fleshless spirituality of the soul of man, separated from that apparatus of action and sensation with which it is now conjoined? We live close upon a change of which we have neither knowledge nor conception. We walk by the margin of a state of which we can gain no glimpse. Solemn, impenetrable mystery broods upon it. We only know that it is life; that in it we are ourselves, deprived of nothing that constitutes our essential being or its due possession and exercise,—consciousness, thought, feeling, activity. Lord! our spirits are safe with thee in other worlds as in this. Father of spirits! into thy hands we commend our spirits.

Finally, we are re clothed. This is the state of immortality, the final condition of man. This St. Paul in the text calls “being clothed upon with our house from heaven,” and he speaks of himself as “earnestly desiring” it. So in the succeeding verse he says: “Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon.” And in Rom. viii., he describes Christians as “groaning within themselves, waiting for the adoption.” And what was this? Not deliverance from flesh, but “the redemption of our bodies.” It is manifestly then his sentiment that the disembodied state is one of comparative disadvantage, to be regarded with a measure of dislike; and that the state of reunion to a material frame, in which it is to issue, and which is to be the ultimate destiny of man, is to be greatly desired in preference. And yet, in our experience of mate-



riality with its manifold ills and infirmities, we hardly know how to welcome it as the alternative of that naked spirituality, from which still, in our utter inexperience of it, we instinctively shrink. But revelation teaches us that the body that shall be, will be such as to secure the advantages of a body without its troubles. Two things seem to be distinctly affirmed of it. It is to issue in some such way out of this present material organization as to be truly one, properly identical, with it. This is resurrection. We are to come up out of our graves in the last day. But it is also to be infinitely superior to it in its capacities and endowments. It is to be spiritual, glorious, like the body of Christ. "Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, it shall be raised in glory; sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be;" but we shall enjoy a state in which the advantages of spirituality and materiality shall be combined without contradiction or interference. Then shall humanity attain perfection, and "mortality be swallowed up of life."

We see here much to dissuade us from a supreme devotion to the sensual and earthly. We have seen that the flesh is not ourselves, but a mere accident and accompaniment of ourselves. To lavish all or the chief part of our care upon it is to neglect ourselves for the sake of our raiment. And this is but a sort of foppery; and assimilates us to the case of that proverbially silly class of persons whose personality seems to be

transfused into their clothes, and who esteem themselves chiefly according to the cut and texture of their garments. When we lavish our thoughts and labours on earthly things, we aim at a good which has no permanent connexion with us, but which we must soon lay aside with that body which alone gives us access to it and enjoyment of it. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof." The minding of the flesh is folly and madness to such beings as we are, and can end only in disappointment, wretchedness and eternal destitution.

We see here much to abate our apprehension of death. What is death? An unclothing, the text tells us, the mere parting with something which never did more than array us and give us a certain visibility, appearance, and relation to external things. *We* do not die. A certain raiment, which for our temporary accommodation is made alive by contact with us, dies; and we, in all that constitutes ourselves properly and permanently, remain alive as before, unimpaired, unharmed, unaltered. Now this, I say, may serve to greatly mitigate our dread of death; as it displays it as an event which spends all the power of destruction that it has on that which is purely adventitious to our proper being, and has no power to harm or to touch anything that really enters into the constitution of humanity. Qualities of the mind and heart, thought, sentiment, feeling, affections, principles, all remain uninjured. Surely the harm that death does us, if it be harm at all, is not very material. We may feel sad at the thought of laying aside a garment which we have found becoming, convenient and serviceable; but our grief rises beyond due proportion when we mourn

as though we were about to be destroyed. We experience no deep distress in view of undressing for our beds. We have done it often unhurt. The garment of the flesh is only a little older and nearer. That last undressing will be just as harmless.

Finally, we see the wisdom of caring for the soul. There is that to us which is permanent as well as that which is transitory. Whatever we lay out on the last will soon be lost labour. What we lay out on the former will never be lost. It enters into the texture of a thing which is incorruptible and eternal. Ornament the soul, the embellishment will shine forever. Improve the soul, the gain will be everlasting. Every advance in wisdom or goodness is a profit to go with us into eternity and minister to our enjoyment through its unending ages. These are gains of which no enemy can despoil us; they are gains in the enduring, imperishable substance of our own being.

The gospel of Christ commends itself to us for its design and capacity to benefit the immortal soul, to heal all its moral diseases, to purify it from all that is base, unworthy and disgraceful, to bring it into the favour of God and enstamp it with the image of his moral perfection. Get the good it offers, and you get a good as lasting as yourselves, as that God into whose presence you are shortly to go, as that eternity where you are shortly to make your changeless habitation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Go to his cross for pardon, to his grace for purity and strength. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

## SERMON XIX.

RIGHTEOUSNESS ALONE PROPERLY  
IMMORTAL.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.—1 JOHN II. 17.

THE obedient man, then, is immortal. Yet the wicked, too, shall continue to exist forever; for there are those that shall “awake to shame and everlasting contempt.” But there is an endless existence that is no immortality; for, being, divested of all that gives it value, is not life. By a very natural and proper figure is such being therefore called death, and its perpetuity, “eternal death,” “everlasting destruction,” a ruin all the more complete because it does not involve the loss of consciousness and activity. To exist with attributes that render existence pleasurable and advantageous is life; to exist thus eternally is eternal life. This is the exclusive privilege and possession of goodness; and goodness is conformity to the divine will, which is the standard of good to creatures. Obedience, then, is the true principle of immortality in men, its pledge and proof; and whosoever has in him the witness of a sincere desire to do the will of God, has the implanted seed of a blissful immortality in his soul, which will spring up and bear fruit when the glory of the world shall be forgotten, and the world itself has been dissolved and passed

away. But this obedience is not merely an outward compliance; it is an inward acquiescence and complacency. The sense of this in the heart is "a well of water that springeth up unto everlasting life," and testifies to it that it is quite out of the reach of all causes of decay, and shall defy and triumph over the utmost might of all instrumentalities of destruction.— "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof."— Neither itself, nor any thing that is in it save man, enjoys the boon of permanent existence. The productions of nature and the creations of art are all perishable. The life of the things that live is very brief. "Fearfully and wonderfully made," full of testimonies to the divine skill, power and goodness, they turn to dust and disappear. Men themselves are mortal in all that pertains to the world, and quickly perish. The lust of the world, its craving appetite of good, well or ill directed, has but limited scope and stay. Its covetousness, its sensuality, its ambition, all end in the poverty, insensibility and meanness of the grave. The avaricious, whose lust is for gold, heaps up and guards his riches till God comes to take him from it, that he may give his hoards to those who will squander it or put it to better use; then, naked, returns to go as he came, and of all that he has takes nothing with him that he may carry away in his hand. The voluptuary, whose lust is for pleasure, fares sumptuously every day, and dies and is buried, and lifts up his eyes where there is not a drop of water to cool his tongue. And the votary of greatness, whose lust is for distinction and power, soon sinks beneath the level of the vilest of

living things, to make his bed in the obscurity and dishonour of the tomb. The scheming politician, the dreamy enthusiast, the fervent fanatic, the devotee of any lust, the lust itself, wise or silly, brief or enduring, vain or successful, is soon quenched forever. Its subject and its object are alike evanescent,—each “a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.” “The dead know not any thing.” “Also their love, and their hatred and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion in any thing that is done under the sun.” Wicked men retain their being indeed, but it is only to feel it a burden and a curse, far worse than nothingness. “He that doeth the will of God abideth forever,” he alone, sole remnant and survivor of this fair and stately world, destined alone of all that is in it to outlive its transitory pageantry and unsubstantial greatness, its long-drawn drama of illustrious men and mighty deeds, and attains in the end a life of endless satisfaction and utility.

“It is plain,” says Archdeacon Manning in a sermon on our text, “that nothing is truly real, which is not eternal. In a certain sense, all things, the most shadowy and fleeting,—the frosts, and dews, and mists of heaven,—are real, every light which falls from the upper air, every reflection of its brightness towards heaven again, is a reality. It is a creature of God; and is here, in His world, fulfilling His will. But these things we are wont to take as the very symbols and parables of unreality, and that because they are changeful and transitory. It is clear then, that when

we speak of realities, we mean things that have in them the germ of an abiding life. Things which pass away at last, how long soever they may seem to tarry with us, we call forms and appearances. They have no intrinsic being; for a time they are, and then they are not. Their very being was an accident; they were shadows of a reality, cast for a time into the world, and then withdrawn. In strictness of speech, we can call nothing real which is not eternal. Now it is in this sense that I have said, the only reality in the world is a will obedient to the will of God."

How this obedience constitutes the only immortality the world can boast, will appear more clearly from a consideration, first of its subject, and then of its object. Its subject is the soul of man; its object the will of God.

Look then, first, at its subject. Here you have a thing intrinsically everlasting; and it is the only thing of that nature in the world. The Creator impressed that property upon it when he made it; and he will never take it away. It can never die in itself, for it is undecaying; and it can never be extinguished by the action of any thing extraneous to itself, for it is indestructible. Of nothing else on earth can this be said; of nothing else is it true. The works of man are strong, solid, durable; the works of God are more so. The first resist the tendencies to dissolution in themselves and the action of destroying causes very long, it may be to the end of the world. But that phrase seals their doom. The works of God out of which they are framed,—for man properly creates nothing,—and on which they rest, shall themselves pass away. Soon,

the substance out of which they are fashioned and the substratum on which they rest, shall disappear, and carry them with it into annihilation. There shall be no survivor but the soul. That shall outlast the wreck, because God wills that it shall, and it is therefore independent of all changes and chances of the world. Its passions and desires may cease; because, the objects to which they are directed being no more, to cherish them were futile and foolish. Yet the aching sense that once they were, and the distressing feeling of the vacancy which they have left, may remain, and be an exquisite wretchedness. But deprived of its idols, and supplied with no substitutes to make up its loss, it may live only to experience the torment of an insatiable and hopeless hunger. But live it must. It has no capacity to die. It can get no leave to die. It can do no suicidal act. It can bribe no executioner to slay it. It may utter poor frantic Saul's appeal,—“Stand, I pray thee, upon me and slay me, for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me,”—there shall be none to answer it. The soul is an imperishable substance, imperishable both as to its being and as to the conscious and active exercise of its powers. Of this only can perpetuity be affirmed of all things below the sun.

But it is time that we passed on to the consideration of the object of human obedience,—the will of God.—In order that the soul, thus everlasting in itself, may attain to a true immortality, it is needful that it should direct itself to some permanent object from which it may derive employment and satisfaction as enduring



as itself. Put it to any transient work, and on the cessation of the work it dies, not by the extinction of its being, but by the loss of all that renders being valuable and desirable. How constantly is the future state of the wicked denominated death in the Scriptures, not as indicating the annihilation of the soul, or its deprivation of activity and sensibility, but its loss of all that makes existence worth having, its reduction to a state of wretchedness which is below annihilation; bare being without any of its uses or blessings. The doing of the will of God is the only business to which the soul can apply itself here, which it can continue to pursue with benefit eternally. Other objects with which it may form a connexion for the purpose of deriving good, perish from beneath it and leave it destitute. They are "of the earth, earthy." They are precarious even as to their temporal duration. Not one of them can go with the soul in its fearful passage into the unseen state. They have no place in the arrangements of eternity.

Let a man devote himself to riches, and no mortal forecast and sagacity can assure him that the process of accumulation shall go on without interruption or defeat till the end; and though it should, there is fatal certainty that the pursuit of wealth is not among the possible occupations of the world to come. There is nothing there for a covetous man to do or to enjoy. If one give himself up to some form of sensuality, grosser or more refined it is all one. An hour's sickness can stop his employment and pleasure at any time, and, it may be, reduce the rest of his life to a dreary blank.

But howsoever that may be, it is evident that flesh and blood are the peculiar booty and possession of the grave, and the spirit sensualized by devotion to them is shortly going to a world where it shall miss alike the instruments and objects of its sensuality forever. What a horrible destitution is before all the sensual! Surely, "to be carnally minded is death." The will of God passes with a man unchanged from this world to another: that alone. The work and pleasure it affords him is an eternal portion. "Forever, O Lord! thy word endureth in heaven." "Concerning thy statutes, I have known long since that thou hast founded them forever." The government of God is unchanging. The years of time and the cycles of eternity work no variation of its principles or prescriptions. If there is that in it from which by co-operation and conformity a moral being can derive delight, then, there is opened to him a perennial and exhaustless source of delight, and he is perfectly sure that he can never be deprived of that which will make eternal existence to him a true deathlessness, an immortality. That there is, a little reflection may suffice to show. We say not how much pleasure there might be in watching with a thorough sympathy the majestic movements and magnificent results of almighty Power on through everlasting ages, though it moved upon some principle of unknown and inscrutable wisdom. But the will of God is neither dark nor arbitrary. For the good of the creature it subsists and operates. It prescribes to man what is naturally beneficial; it prohibits to him what is naturally injurious. Obedience to it is avoid-

ance of causes of pain and pursuit of causes of pleasure. There is no man that obeys it in this life, who does not feel himself thereby dignified and improved, a better thing in his own appreciation, a richer source of satisfaction to himself. So it shall be to a much higher degree in eternity; for there the good man shall enjoy a much clearer insight into that will, and a more perfect conformity to its behests. Conscience, a sense of obligation, a sense also of what is fit, not as the ground of obligation but its concomitant and ally, is the tormentor of the disobedient, the comforter of the obedient, powerful in this world, more powerful under the stronger lights of the world to come. Conformity to the will of God makes the soul happy, and as that will is eternal, it can make the soul eternally happy. Here then is provision for immortal felicity. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever," not merely in the preservation of his being, for that rests not upon character, but in the preservation of it from becoming a curse, and a burden, and a torture to him, such as might make it his occupation forever to wish and vainly wish its termination. All else passes away, sinks into nihility, or remains a miserable wreck, stripped of all but the horrible consciousness of want. Obedience alone gives life substance and reality, permanent value and permanent delight. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

We see then, my brethren, the purpose of our creation, that purpose in the fulfilment of which alone it can yield to us the benefits which the Creator designed

to bestow,—the keeping of the commandments of God. In them the will of God concerning us is embodied. They are to us its exponent and equivalent. This rescues religion from that vagueness and unreality which to many minds it wears, as though it were a thing of notions and emotions, made up altogether of certain inward movements of the mind and heart. Oh no, nothing can be more practical, nothing can take more immediate and palpable hold of the common business of common life. How evident it is, that it is not confined to a few periods of peculiar reflection and sensibility, to our closets and our churches; for life's business, life's substance, life's value is to do the will of God, and this is a work applicable to all times and all places, to our parlours and our work-shops, our scenes of labour and of pleasure, a work that never need to cease for any want of occasion or opportunity. We have only to mix up the thought of God's will with our engagements, whatsoever they be if they are not intrinsically sinful, and join to them an intention to do it, to give a religious value to any act, and render it a contribution to our eternal welfare.

There are many things that we cannot always be doing. We cannot always be praying, or reading the Scriptures, or occupying ourselves in acts specifically pious. But we can always be doing the will of God, by exercising a right temper of mind in reference to his government, and aiming in all things to subserve its ends. Life thus spent will never be barren of good to us. We shall be elaborating underneath its secular exterior a precious substance, which, when its perisha-

ble shell pertaining to this transient world shall crumble off, will remain an indestructible and abiding portion in eternity. It consecrates life; it gives it substance and reality; it rescues it from waste and perversion; it works out within its narrow precincts and mean labours, a portion of the soul, "incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

But let me not be supposed in saying so much in praise of obedience, of virtuous and dutiful works, to inculcate a legal religion, to represent heaven as the purchase of meritorious service, to countenance spiritual pride and self-righteousness, to underrate doctrine, to overlook repentance and faith, or found our acceptance with God on any other ground than that of a free pardon of our sins through the merits of the Redeemer appropriated by faith, accorded to us by the free mercy of Heaven. Nay, all these things are part of the will of God concerning us, and there can be no true and proper doing of that will that excludes them. "This is the work of God,"—the work his will enjoins,— "that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."—"What shall I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." "Men and brethren, what shall we do?—Repent and be baptized, every one of you." The inward exercises of evangelical religion then, the conformity of the mind to Gospel truth, enters essentially into the keeping of God's commandments; and upon it as a basis rests the acceptable performance of all practical duties, which are indeed no more than its manifestation and fruit. Would you then give your existence permanent value, bestow upon it a substance,

which shall make it a source of everlasting satisfaction and blessedness?

Study the will of God. "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Seek to have an intelligent and complete acquaintance with the will of God concerning you, with all that he prescribes and enjoins as the condition of his favour according to the terms of the Gospel. Go to the pure fountains of divine knowledge, and study their revelations with attention, with docility, with perseverance. Consult them continually. Pray for light that you may know their meaning, and submit your understanding with childlike simplicity to their teaching and guidance.

Embrace the will of God. Let it not lie a dead and cold mass of dogmas and precepts in the mind. Be not content to know what the provisions of salvation and the principles of duty are. The science of religion or of ethics may stand as far away from a religious life, as the science of astronomy from its uses. It is not the will of God that we should merely know his will, but that we should fashion our inner life into a conformity with its dictates, that we should be penitent, believing, humble, devout men, men whose spirit is controlled and regulated by the requisitions of the Gospel.

Practise the will of God. Knowing what the will of God is, and laying hold of it with a sincere consent and conformity of the heart, submit your conduct to its governance and direction. Keep the commandments. Let your every action be an act of obedience.

Make no exception in duty. Take it all into your scheme of life. Carry it all out resolutely and perseveringly in its practical business. This, this alone, will give existence substance, reality, dignity, permanent and everlasting blessedness. For he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

## SERMON XX.

## THE ANSWER TO PRAYER RECEIVED BY FAITH.

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.—1 JOHN v. 14, 15.

I SUPPOSE, that a very considerable amount of error prevails in regard to the answer of prayer. That answer is by many supposed to be a more tangible and ascertainable result than it really is. Now, in saying this, I do not mean to intimate that the answer of prayer is not real, for that were to controvert one of the plainest and most comfortable truths of Scripture; but simply to suggest that its nature and indications may be somewhat different from popular and prevalent impressions, that the answer of prayer, actual, precious, certain, is nevertheless addressed rather to faith than to sight, and is to be apprehended chiefly by the same confidence in God, which prompts prayer itself. Now, I am well aware that this may be a less agreeable and satisfactory view of the subject, than that which is commonly entertained; for men are exceedingly eager for palpable effects, and are indisposed to credit the reality of that which is not indicated to them by manifest and unequivocal proofs. But we are really more concerned to obtain truth than gratification, and should always be more anxious to ascertain what the mind of the Lord is, and ready to ac-



count it, whatever it may be, "good, acceptable and perfect," than to find it in accordance with our wishes, previous expectations and conclusions.

And, moreover, this view, if it be calmly and firmly maintained, will, in the end, afford the soul more comfort and tranquillity, than one which keeps it ever in a state of feverish expectancy, on a perpetual look-out for visible signs and tokens. And surely, he will cherish a much higher sense of the value and efficacy of prayer, and feel more deeply the extent of his obligations to divine goodness, who, in the spirit of simple faith, believes that he has the petitions that he has asked of him, just because God has promised to hear and answer them, than he who measures its success by visible signs and instances. To answer prayer God has promised: to make the answer of prayer evident he has not promised. If we believe his promise, we may know that our prayer is answered as certainly, in cases where the answer is obscure or utterly undiscoverable, as in those where it is clearly and unequivocally perceptible. And in this conviction an immense amount of satisfaction is secured to the Christian mind, which is otherwise lost. It enjoys a delightful consciousness of success in the very act of asking; it outruns the slow wheels of providence, and reaches the goal, to which they are leisurely rolling on, at once; it gets the benefit of dissembled, disguised, procrastinated answers, which otherwise it might not last long enough to welcome, or which might not be recognised when they came. The faith in prayer that rests on tangible consequences and literal fulfilments, must be sadly

harassed and tempted. How small an amount of its fruits can in this way be identified and appropriated. How much prayer, on this hypothesis, must either be wholly unprofitable, or confine its benefits to the moral influence it exerts on the petitioner. I confess, if I were to adopt this theory, I should be compelled to regard this moral influence as the principal and primary, almost the exclusive, use of prayer, and to attribute to it very little efficacy, as a means of procuring specified blessings, influential on the divine mind, and drawing down the mercies for which it supplicates from the hand of God.

Yet such proper, literal prevalency the Scriptures plainly ascribe to prayer; and any other view of it must rob it of animation, energy and comfort. Religion is in all its departments a business of faith. In all that it calls us to do, we "walk by faith and not by sight." Prayer is no exception. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." We approach "the throne of grace" as to the presence of a father; and a father's promise is enough: we need not present possession or ocular attainment. We repose on the Father's love and faithfulness as sweetly as we could on any immediate and sensible communication of benefits. We know that we have the petitions that we have asked as certainly, as though their realization were matter of instant and sensible discovery. This then is the answer of prayer,—the deep conviction that the Being to whom it is addressed is able, willing, faithful. It is apprehended by faith, not by sight.

It is certain, cheering, not because we perceive it by our senses, but because it rests upon the word of One, who is "more ready to hear than we to pray, and wont to give more than either we desire or deserve."

In pursuing our subject further, then, let us consider, that when God promises to answer prayer, he does not limit himself as to the time, the mode or the form of the answer, but leaves himself the largest liberty and discretion in all these respects. Hence, the answer of prayer, though always certain and real, is not always immediately or unequivocally distinguishable; and we may hastily pronounce that prayer unsuccessful, whose answer is only yet future, or hidden under a disguise.

Consider, first, then, that God in answering our prayers allows himself great latitude of time. We are impatient creatures, eager for speedy and immediate results. But God is always calm, deliberate, judicious. He waiteth to be gracious, not capriciously but discreetly. A benefit often owes its chief value to its being seasonable, opportune. And the discipline of delay is frequently even a greater profit than the bliss of fruition. "It is good for a man that he should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God." Hence, "he that believeth will not make haste," but will by faith borrow the deliberation of God, and transfuse it into his own bosom. He will avoid hasty hopes, impatient expectations and precipitate conclusions. He will put confidence in God, in his paternal wisdom, as well as his paternal love. We cannot be too sensible of the puerility of our judgments and

desires, and the advantage of having them revised and corrected by the knowledge of One whose judgment is unerring. He is the "only wise." And as he is our Father, and his regard and treatment of us altogether fatherly, we need have no fear that our interests will not be properly cared for, and our applications duly registered and heeded.

But God's procedure is quiet and leisurely, while our wishes are turbulent and headstrong. He sees no occasion for haste. There is time enough to do all that his wisdom or his love would suggest in that eternity which he inhabits. His measures of time are not ours. There is room enough, even in that brief fragment of eternity which he appoints to us here, for the ample manifestation and enjoyment of every blessing which he may accord to our prayers. Nay, he may oftentimes foresee great advantages of delay. The benefit he is reserving in his hand is ours fully, and kept temporarily out of our possession, only because it is safer and more profitable to us thus, than it would be in our own hands.

Meanwhile, under God's stewardship it is ripening and growing into a richer boon than it would have been, if it had been bestowed at once in compliance with our impatient wishes,—crude, immature, comparatively unproductive, as it must have been, if it had been given sooner. God is doubtless exercising something of the same sort of discretion in granting our requests, as earthly parents use in the treatment of the wishes of their children, and with the same affectionate and gracious intent. A parent's love should be a wise love, a love that aims not so much at grati-

fication, as at usefulness. It should be regulated by the law of discretion, as well as by the law of kindness. The child prefers its request, and is kindly heard, and cheered with a promise that its request shall be performed. But time passes on, and brings no performance. The parent never alludes to the request, and seems to have forgotten it. The child grows restless, angry and unhappy. By and by, by significant indications he reminds the parent of his promise; but still he obtains nothing but a benignant smile or a gentle word. He waits, perhaps, till hope sinks into despair or forgetfulness; and then, when expectation has vanished, the benefit comes, and brings with it such clear evidence of being altogether timely, in its peculiar suitability to the circumstances, as convinces him at once, that it is a much greater favour to him, than it would have been if it had been bestowed earlier, and administers a fit reproof of his unbelief and peevishness. Meanwhile, the request was granted at once, but the actual conveyance was withheld till a fitting opportunity. So prayer to God is immediately successful; for the promise is, "Before they call, I will answer them, and whilst they are yet speaking I will hear." There can be no doubt that the success of the Syrophenician woman's request, for instance, was as complete, in the mind of the Saviour, in the first moment of her application to him, as it was in the sequel. But she received a much better boon in the end than she would have obtained at first; for she had grown better in seeking it, and when it came, was far better prepared to welcome and appreciate it.\*

\* See, also, Daniel x. 3, 12.

We are hasty, then, in pronouncing a request unanswered, the answer of which has not yet attained manifestation. This is taking counsel rather of our own impatience, than of God's wisdom and fidelity. For the thing we have asked may have been instantly granted, only its actual communication is temporarily and graciously deferred. If so, it is recorded among those gifts of God which are without repentance or recall, is as sure as though it were this moment in our possession, and is only reserved for us, till that juncture shall arrive, when it may be exhibited and conveyed to us to our greatest advantage. And it may be, that the completion of that effect which is to be produced by a preparatory discipline of previous waiting and trusting and praying, is the very result, which, when accomplished, will render its bestowment safe and salutary, and exalt the value and sweetness of its fruition a thousand-fold.

Consider, secondly, that the answer of prayer is without limitation in regard to the mode. God binds himself to grant our requests, but he limits himself to no particular method of granting them. It may be that in our anticipations of success we include both the object and the manner; but the promise on which it is grounded includes only the former. Hence, we are liable to disappointment, because the benefit sought, conferred in a way so foreign to our expectations, is disguised from our knowledge, and fails of recognition as an answer of prayer. God is not wont to bestow his favours, especially spiritual favours, on men, directly. He far more commonly employs indirect and circuitous

processes for their conveyance. When he is about to do us good, he sets us and other agents at work, and oftenest, upon some task which has no visible connexion with the designed result; and he induces the appropriate action by dispositions of his providence, the bearing of which we may not be quick to recognise, or able to conjecture. We are fain to leap to our result at once; but he chooses to interpose an intermediate chain of means and efforts, the fitness and efficacy of which are not apparent, nor always even discoverable. We look for some public and perceptible interposition: he chooses a stealthy and secret agency. "What I do," he virtually says to us, "thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." "His ways are not our ways, neither are our thoughts his thoughts: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts." "He bringeth the blind by a way that they know not, and leadeth them in paths that they have not known." These unfamiliar, unexpected, obscure, indirect, circuitous methods of doing us good God delights in employing. Hence, we do not often perceive the success of our petitions, as the fruit of God's immediate agency. It comes as the effect of second causes, and, too often, is overlooked altogether as it respects its connexion with our prayers, and regarded only as some incidental and secondary consequence of a train of events put in motion for some other purpose. We lose sight of its connexion with its true source, in the multiplicity of intermediate objects and events, not for the most part evidently rele-

vant or suitable to the end. We pray for a new heart, and we expect our answer in the upspringing and operation within us of new desires, new affections, new principles and new purposes. Or we ask for the production or increase of some spiritual grace, and the signal of success is to be, according to our preconceived judgment, in our consciousness of its working and influence in our souls.

But the real answer may come in changes of our external state unlooked for and unwelcome, such as will call us to toil and suffering, under the operation of which, by the secret influences of the divine Spirit, the result we desire may be slowly and painfully developed. We looked for the blessing by immediate and easy communications; it comes under a course of prolonged and afflictive discipline. And it is during the operation of some such course of external training, the propriety of which we do not discover, the design and efficacy of which we do not recognise, that the spiritual result is actually being produced, gradually and indirectly, which we are looking for, as the fruit of a process altogether independent of it, and clearly distinguishable from it. And thus the blessing, when it comes, coming by successive small instalments, brought each one by a separate outward instrument employed apparently for some very different end, is not recognised as the answer of some prayer, from which it stands so widely separated, with which it has so little manifest or traceable connexion. The affairs of the world are guided by a regard to many concurrent purposes, which are wrought out by the simulta-



neous and co-operative action of many different instrumentalities. No one interest is, commonly, in the economy of the divine government so singled out and isolated, that its history can be separately traced and studied. We pour our prayers out before the throne of grace, and not one of them is forgotten before God. Every one of them has its power; every one of them yields its appropriate fruit. But they enter that vast ocean of activity by which the affairs of the world are directed, and are seemingly lost, as the rain drops that sink into the bosom of "the great and wide sea." But each carries its contribution to the power by which that activity is sustained, and helps to quicken springs and wheels, whose motion, under the guidance of divine wisdom, spins out every separate thread, through seemingly inextricable entanglement and confusion, to its own appropriate and certain consummation. How unreasonable, that we should expect a distinct economy, as it were, to be maintained for the satisfaction of every individual, so clear and definite that we shall be able to study and comprehend it, thoroughly to trace the connexion of its parts, and the sequence of its stages! Nay, not so; we must be content with the general assurance that God will let none of our words uttered in faith fall to the ground, receive as well as offer our prayers by faith, and "cast our bread upon the waters," satisfied to know that we have not lost it, but "shall find it after many days."

Consider, thirdly, that God in answering prayer holds himself at perfect liberty in regard to the shape of its answer. Whether that which we ask for be really,

or only apparently, good for us, or whether it be compatible with higher interests pertaining to ourselves or others must be left to his decision. "Our ignorance in asking," and especially in reference to temporal things, we ought not to overlook. God surely has not bound himself to grant our requests blindly and indiscriminately. "If we ask any thing according to his will," and his will is always coincident with our real welfare, for there is no such thing as any thing being really good for us which is contrary to God's will, "he heareth us." There is here a most important limitation and exception. And yet we ought not to believe, that even those applications which are offered mistakenly, in our blindness and ignorance, are wasted breath. In all true prayer, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities." And God "knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit," a different mind from ours, it may be, and certainly a wiser, for "He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." He will in all such cases hear us according to the Spirit's meaning, and not according to our own. We prayed for a good, and if we asked an evil supposing it to be a good, God will withhold the evil for which we asked in word, and give us the good for which we asked in intention. We pray always, if we pray wisely, with a tacit, if not an express reservation and proviso—If it be thy will; if it be really conducive to our welfare. And we mean always, that if in these respects we err, God, the All-wise, shall correct our petitions for us, and substitute what we need for what we desire. A parent, in the exercise of his parental authority and discretion, will often feel

obliged to deny the requests of his children. But no parent, if he be really wise, will coldly repel the trustful approaches of his family. He will often feel compelled to say, I cannot give you this, for it would do you harm, but he will always add, I will give you something in its stead, which is better for you. God is virtually saying the same thing to us continually. The removal of a trouble, for instance, may not be so great a blessing to us as grace to bear it; and in that case, God will withhold the inferior good which we ask, and give us the greater good which we do not ask. "For this," says St. Paul, (he meant his "thorn in the flesh,") "I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. But he answered me, My grace is sufficient for thee." He graciously construes our meaning for us, according to his deep, penetrating insight, and not according to our shallow impressions. It is as though he said, You do not mean what you say, for you are misled by false impressions. I will give your words a meaning more compatible with your real welfare; and, while I honour your faith in asking, honour it by an attention to your actual interests, rather than by a compliance with your fallacious desires. Thus we see, that the answer of prayer is no more always literal in kind, than, as we have seen before, it is always immediate in time, or direct in manner.

From all these considerations, it must appear to reflecting minds, that the answer of prayer must necessarily be a thing of great obscurity and of manifold disguises; and that our confidence in it, and consequent satisfaction from it, must rest far more on the word of

God, than upon direct experience, observation, recognition, consciousness. And thus the truth in regard to this solemn and interesting subject stands well embodied and vindicated in the words of the text: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him"—and in those parallel words of our Saviour: "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." And this view, it is thought, is very needful in order to preserve men from the disquietude, disappointment and despondency, which an opposite view is fitted to engender. It enables men to commit their cause to God, with that calm confidence and serenity, which an unshaken trust in his goodness and fidelity cannot fail to inspire; a trust, built not on outward tokens and visible manifestations, but on the exhaustless truth and love of the unchangeable God. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

## S E R M O N X X I.

## FEARFUL ODDS.

If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?—JEREMIAH XII. 5.

THIS life abounds with trials and troubles, which it is hard for flesh to combat and endure. We weary and faint under their frequent recurrence, and find both the tone of our minds and the vigour of our bodies gradually worn and bowed by the toils of an incessant and hopeless warfare. The buoyancy of our youthful hope soon sinks under the buffetings of a continual storm; we find our spirits flag and our arms hang down, as we struggle on against its fury; and sometimes, when, as ever and anon it will, the tempest augments its rage and fierceness, we are ready to cry out, with the desponding patriarch, "I loathe it: I would not live alway," or exclaim, with the persecuted Psalmist, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! Lo! then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo! then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."

But though "we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened," and often, in our fretfulness and despair, are ready to relieve ourselves of the pressure of

our load of ills by leaving that "earthly house" in which they have gained too firm a lodgement to be driven out; yet, when the scenes which await us on being "unclothed" rush upon the mind, we instinctively shrink back into our shattered and uncomfortable dwelling, glad even of so poor a shelter from the terrors and perils that wait without. We call death to our rescue; but are sore affrighted with his ugliness, and recoil from his presence, when he obeys our summons. Alas! we then find, that there are evils worse than those from which we have sought a riddance; that relief from life's troubles may be purchased at too dear a price; and that an impatient flight from pursuing enemies has only driven us into the toils of their chief and king. The trials and harassments that betide us are fraught with a wiser and more profitable lesson than this,—one which we shall do well to heed. They may be counted as experiments on our powers of endurance, tests of our strength, and, in their actual operation, alas! proofs how little is our fortitude, how great our weakness. They are but preliminary visits, admonitory essays, faint foretokenings and earnestings, of that death and judgment, which are shortly to come. And, as we quail and shrink before them, we should be taught our native feebleness, and our incapacity to meet the sorer conflicts that await us; and thus be led to cast about us for foreign aid, and, with all promptitude and diligence, labour to provide ourselves with "weapons mighty through God," and auxiliaries of heavenly prowess, against "the coming of the great and dread-

ful day of the Lord." "If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is small," inadequate utterly to the exigencies, the pains, vexations and vicissitudes of life;—how then will it stand thee in stead "in the hour of death and in the day of judgment?" If flesh and heart could not hold thee up in the-time of earthly trouble, if physical nerve and mental resolution gave way before the assaults of disease and sorrow,—then what shall stay thee up when "flesh and heart fail," when body and spirit faint together in the grasp of death? "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how wilt thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee,—then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" If thou art overborne and cast down by "these light afflictions which are but for a moment,"—then, how wilt thou "dwell with the devouring fire?" how wilt thou "dwell with everlasting burnings?" If now, conscious guilt and pollution make thee tremble at the thought of an unseen, but just, and holy, and present, and observing God,—then, oh! how wilt thou bear to meet him face to face, revealed to thy immediate perception, bearing in his hand the record of thy misdeeds, and pointing to the stains and defilements of thy soul? "Can thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong, in the day when he shall deal with thee?" Rather, convinced of thy incompetency to endure even the "few stripes," which he lays on thee while "his wrath is kindled but a little," to warn thee with paternal kindness, by these "hidings of his power," how terrible and ruinous the visitings

of his hand will be, when he shall "suffer his whole displeasure to arise," and "awake to the judgment he hath appointed" and purposes, but long postpones; now, "in this thy day," make him thy friend, engage him to stand upon thy part, "take hold upon his strength to make peace with him;" that, by his aid and countenance, through which only thou canst, thou mayst be "able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all to stand."

I invite you, with the view of impressing this consideration more forcibly, to a brief survey of the weakness of man under some of the principal evils of the present state of being, as evincing his alarming insufficiency to encounter the correspondent but aggravated circumstances of the world to come.

In "passing through this vale of misery," we are assailed with afflictions of "mind, body and estate;" and in their effects, are forewarned of similar but fiercer assaults, which await us, when its rough and painful declivity shall at length land us in that deeper and darker "valley of the shadow of death," in which it ends.

I. The troubles of the mind in this life are often sharp and bitter, enough to tax its powers to the seeming limit of endurance. We see the spirit often fail before them, stunned or frenzied by their violence. The mind is, indeed, the seat of all sorrow, since it is not any arrangement of mechanism that can perceive and feel. The corporeal senses are but avenues, by which information reaches the obscure recess where thought and feeling dwell, in order to put the spiritual



inmate into a state of suffering or pleasure suitable to its good or evil tidings, a telegraphic system, by which the spirit holds communication with the distant objects of an external world. What we call bodily pain and pleasure, are but impressions made upon the soul by the intelligence which it receives of some harm or kindness done to its fleshly dwelling. But those are, in an especial manner, the troubles of the mind, which originate in its own substance, which arise from the contemplation of its own operations, character and prospects.

When the mind looks back upon its past history, views its present state, and anticipates its future destiny, and finds in them respectively occasions of regret, shame and alarm, it is filled with acute suffering. And if this survey is directed to its moral condition and relations, if it is led to view itself as endowed with a capacity to know and choose good and evil, as having its being under the government of God, bound to obey his laws, and liable to answer at his throne for all its faults and offences, it tastes the bitterness of an accusing conscience, and is stung with keen remorse, and agitated with horrible dread. And there are times in the life of every man, when conscience thus puts forth its fearful power, and exchanges the low muttering of its ordinary reproofs for the loud thunder of a stern and pointed rebuke; when its smouldering fire flashes up with the blaze of a "furnace heated one seven times more than it is wont to be heated." Then it is, that conscience intimates its dormant power, and hints at the torment which it knows how to

inflict. Yet, we may be well assured, that its doings, even at these times, are but hints of what it can and will do. We know that sometimes the memory gains a strange vividness; or the thoughts get a terrible fixedness and motionless concentration upon some single sin, it may be, remote, but oftener, recent; or a sudden gleam of irresistible self-knowledge breaks forth, and horribly lights up the dark closets of the soul; or the thick cloud that hides futurity bursts apart and rolls aside, and the habitual "looking-for of judgment" becomes a looking of perdition in the face. And then, we guess, what stores of pain, memory, with its unimaginable fulness of charges, and reflection, without recess or end, on every one of them, and self-estimation, just, clear, perfect and perpetual, and expectation, certain, vivid and far-reaching, contain, and are keeping against the day of our departure from the body and arraignment before God. Then, indeed, are the "arrows of the Almighty within us, the poison whereof drinketh up our spirit:" then, "the terrors of God set themselves in array against us."

Yet, in such moments of unwonted moral illumination, we do but guess of that which shortly shall be. What the eye then sees, it sees, after all, but "through a glass darkly." And oh! if the glimpse be so horrible, what shall be the naked vision? If such periods be so rich in suffering, what shall be the eternity they foreshadow? If the sinful soul so faints under a single ray from the distant presence of its God, how shall it bear the concentrated brightness of the beams of his near and visible majesty? And oh! then, how

slight is the extremest torture that conscience can now inflict, to the misery of that hour, when God shall come "to convince all that are ungodly among you of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed?" For memory is now exceedingly imperfect; and self-knowledge partial, and the horrors of the prospect before us mitigated by the medium of future opportunity and preparation, through which they are seen. Time covers up much of our wickedness from ourselves; and self-love and the "deceitfulness of sin" soften the ugliness of our faults; and futurity presents a thousand avenues of escape, and "convenient seasons" of reformation. Thus we now have resorts and refuges whither we can betake ourselves from the arrows of conscience. Then, oh! "if in this land of peace wherein we trust,"—wherein there is so much in which the soul may confide, so much to stay it up, and give it quietness in reference to its controversy and reckoning with God,—we find the sense of our sinfulness and the apprehensions of wrath too much for us, a wearisome "burden too heavy to be borne," what, oh! what "shall we do in the swelling of Jordan," when "the waters shall overflow our hiding-places?" Now, Christ is "a covert from the storm," accessible even if not entered, and there is relief in the sight of its nearness and sufficiency; "but in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh him." And if "a wounded spirit we cannot bear," now, while there are so many nostrums of our own to soothe its pains, while there is a sovereign balm at hand to heal it, and a good Physician near

to bind it up; how, oh! how shall we endure its smart, when "indignation shall vex it as a thing that is raw" beneath its own eye; and the eye of God, shining into it with an insufferable brightness, shall give it a keen sense of what it has been, is, and shall be, and all the universe cannot afford it a covert, or a balsam to assuage its agony?

II. The body has its pains, too, in this life, and they are many and exquisite. We are "fearfully" as well as "wonderfully made," compacted of an infinite number of frail, delicate and sensitive fibres, which are broken and lacerated by very trivial causes and accidents. We are "crushed before the moth;" and we are surrounded by firmer substances, the very contact and motion of which endanger things so fragile. Yes, we are creatures highly susceptible of injury and pain, living in an armory filled with instruments of death and engines of torture, which almost the impulse of our breath or the weight of our finger is enough to move to their work of destruction and torment. And but that God "keepeth all our bones," and "giveth his angels charge concerning us to keep us in all our ways," and watches over us with a care that is well nigh miraculous, our life would be nought else but pain and agony.

When God is pleased, sometimes, in order to teach us a lesson of our dependence, to intermit his care, terrible diseases and calamities teach us how numerous and wide are the inlets, by which distress may enter, in the texture of these mortal bodies. Go, stand by some couch of suffering, where sickness has

laid a fellow-being, and learn how much man may suffer, in the words, but more in the looks and motions, of the sufferer. His whole aspect is an affecting appeal for help, which we have no power to render. "He is chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out." Ah! he exclaims, "My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread." "I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day." "When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams and terrifiest me with visions; so that my soul chooseth strangling and death rather than my life. I loathe it: I would not live alway." But in all this there has no affliction "taken him, but that which is common unto men." These are mortal sufferings, laid upon a mortal by Him, who will lay upon us no greater burden than we are able to bear. Yet they are enough to rob life of its worth, to make men weary of it, as we see, and even "rejoice when they can find the grave."

What then, may be the sufferings of which an immortal and "spiritual body" may be capable? And how intolerable the anguish, of which the refined and exquisite texture of that indestructible and everlasting

organization which awaits us at the resurrection, may be susceptible! And, if the physical pains of such gross and dull senses as we now possess, be so terrible, what may we imagine to be the miseries of the more lively and pungent sensibilities, with which we shall be endowed hereafter? We know not what depth of meaning is hidden in the phraseology of an unquenchable fire, an undying worm, and an eternal death. God give us grace, so to take warning from the shrinking of our nature under its earthly pains, that we be not left to endure the sharper pangs of an incorruptible and more excellent body.

III. And finally, we are here forced to endure distresses of estate, of outward and relative situation. Though the mind be at peace with itself, and the body be sound, we may labour under great disadvantages and annoyances of position, the perception and influence of which are enough to imbitter our days. "The destruction of the poor is their poverty." "And oppression maketh a wise man mad." Lot, by an evil choice, makes his abode in obscene and abominable Sodom, and his soul is "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." David wanders off among the heathen; and soon he is forced to cry, "My soul hath long dwelt with them who are enemies to peace!" "Wo is me, that I am constrained to sojourn in Me-sech, and to have my habitation in the tents of Kedar." Jeremiah stays at home among his own people; but his plaint is not less heavy: "Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people and go from them." Per-

haps "a man's foes are they of his own household." There is no sorer trouble than that. Here is one who wears the outward paraphernalia of consequence and prosperity, but there is a worm gnawing at the heart of his happiness. There is some hidden mischief that spoils all; some vicious, or sickly, or idiot child, it may be, some wayward spirit in his family, some "root of bitterness" in his domestic circumstances, which men either do not see, or justly estimate, that poisons all his good things. Yonder is a man who might be happy, if there were not so many above him in society, whose level he cannot reach. A little matter will suffice to destroy the sweetness of a thousand blessings. Haman, though a king's favourite, said that all his wealth and honours "availed him nothing, so long as Mordecai the Jew sat at the king's gate," and would not rise to do him reverence. And Ahab, though the king himself, went to bed sad and sick, because Naboth would not sell him a piece of ground "for a garden of herbs." Ahithophel hung himself just because his advice was not followed. Rebecca was weary of her life, because she did not like Esau's wives. And Jonah asked God to kill him, because his gourd had withered, and the sun was hot. What a pitiful picture of life this is. I know of nothing that can make us more sensible of our weakness, than the observation of the trifling causes which we allow to ruin our peace. And yet there are a plenty of evils in the circumstances of men, that are not trifles.

Now, if we find it so hard to bear the inconveniences and annoyances of this life, where is the strength to

endure the discomforts of a situation in a world, where all the society is vile and malignant, "hateful, and hating one another," and all the circumstances fraught with nothing but mortification, disgrace, restraint, impotent desire, ineffectual effort, and hopeless resistance? "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how wilt thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

We see then, my brethren, how easily we are made miserable; what exposures and liabilities to suffering our being involves; how small are our powers, either of resistance or endurance. We contend against fearful odds; we fight with One who is stronger than we. Oh! then, let the exhaustion and vexation wherewith our Omnipotent Antagonist makes known his power, in the milder visitings of his displeasure that reach us this side the grave, persuade us to leave off our mad rebellion, and seek a timely peace. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;" and knowing it yourselves in your own bitter experience of "the power of his wrath," oh! do not resist persuasion. God wills not your destruction. He "is slow to anger," as well as "great in power." He is "plenteous in mercy," though "he will by no means clear the guilty." He protests against the fool-hardiness with which his feeble creatures rush on to a conflict in which they can look for nothing but to be worsted and ruined. He stands among you in the person of his Son, with words of expostulation, entreaty and



affection, and tells you that he has bought you with his blood, and draws you with his grace, and keeps for you a home in heaven. Oh! he cries, in accents of tender pity, ye feeble, weary, dying creatures, leave off your hopeless and fatal contest. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

## SERMON XXII.

## THE LAW OF LIBERTY.

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.—JAMES II. 12.

BY "the law of liberty" is meant the gospel, whose principles and precepts form a rule of life now, and will be the rule of reward hereafter. It is a law, inasmuch as it prescribes a particular form of character and course of conduct with authority and sanctions; and it is a law of liberty, inasmuch as the only adequate obedience to it is one which is perfectly free, voluntary and cheerful. It is a law that has power to work in its subjects such a spirit, as will render their "service perfect freedom," procure from them a willing and cheerful performance of its behests, and create such a thorough coincidence between its requirements and the choice of their wills, as will rid their submission of any feeling of restraint or awe of authority. A law of liberty is a law which a man obeys freely and of choice, and, in obeying, accomplishes as truly the dictates of his own spirit, as the mandates of superior power. The outward commandment and the inward impulse coalesce; and the compliance which fulfils the injunction of the former, gratifies also the desire of the latter. So that, reverent and implicit subjection becomes a spontaneous and hearty, and so an easy and delight-

ful, work. The law is not taken away, but ceases to press and goad; because, by reason of an inward conformity to it, it is scarcely felt, and is almost as though it were not,—inclination anticipating its directions, and lightening all its tasks. This the Psalmist meant, when he said, “I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts.” The gospel becomes thus “a law of liberty,” to all whom it renders right-minded and so like-minded with itself, in two respects.

Our speaking and doing, the sentiments we cherish and avow, and the course of conduct we pursue, should be conformed to this law and imbued with its spirit, continually controlled by the consideration that it is a law of liberty, one which can be adequately honoured and fulfilled only by a willing and generous obedience. We must beware of a servile, grudging, niggard temper; of having, and revealing either by words or acts, any thing like reluctance and compulsion; so professing or performing compliance, as to disclose the fact, and make the impression, that it is forced and burdensome.

We are to remember, moreover, that we are to be judged by this law. Law of liberty though it is, and satisfied with none other than a free and voluntary subjection, containing in itself the means to persuade and enable its subjects to obey “not of constraint but willingly,” and counting no other service but such a one of any value, it is still a law, an authoritative rule of life, creating responsibility in those to whom it is given, and warning them of a day when their life will be made the subject of strict investigation under its terms and precepts, and eternal retribution

be meted out to them according thereto. A law of liberty is not then mere counsel, nor an allowance of unbridled license which confounds moral distinctions and leaves human actions without guidance and control; but is simply a law so marvellously constructed, as to contain within itself the means of obtaining the spontaneous submission of those over whom it is put, by infusing a correspondence to its will into their minds and hearts. It relieves the subject, not by lifting off his burden, but by fitting his shoulder to bear it comfortably, and, as it were, unconsciously. At the same time, it relaxes not its demand upon those who will not yield to its rectifying and liberating influence, but presses on them with an inexorable and galling obligation while they live, and calls them to a strict and ruinous reckoning in the world to come.

We said that the gospel is a law of liberty to men in two respects.

I. It is such by its transforming effect upon their principles and dispositions. A law is oppressive, and felt to be a restriction upon freedom of action, only to a refractory and rebellious mind. The misery of man's case is, that he "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be:" that is, he not only actually disobeys it, but there is no natural ability in him to fulfil its behests, nor any provision in his natural circumstances to produce it. He can be freed only by a change of the law, adapting it to his wishes and inclinations, or by a change of himself, adapting his wishes and inclinations to it. But, the law of God is immutable, intrinsically and necessarily, inasmuch

as it is his authoritative declaration of what is right and best for his creatures; and of what he, as a being of infinite righteousness, goodness and wisdom, wills them to be and to do. It cannot alter therefore, till He changes who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," and could not be any otherwise than he is without deterioration and ceasing to be God; or till man loses the capacities and relations with which creative power has endowed him and ceases to be man. There can be no mutation or yielding then on that side. The gospel does not repeal or alter God's law, but republishes it with some remedial and corrective accompaniments. By these, it aims to effect relief for man in that only other way which is practicable,—the rectification of his wishes and inclinations, so as to make them coincide with the behests of the law, in order that he may not be free without obedience, but free in obedience. To this, as one of its two main ends, are all the provisions of the gospel, as contradistinguished from the law, directed. This it aims to accomplish by its work of atonement and satisfaction, clearing the way for the exercise of mercy, by its offer of pardon through that atonement, by its gift of the Spirit, and by its promise of eternal life to the believing and penitent. This it effects, whenever, by its overtures and influences it induces any man to renounce his rebellion, and return to the service of his rightful Lord. This the Scriptures mean, when they say, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed;" and speak of the law as dead, and believers as "not under the law," that is, no longer exposed to its penalty, nor tormented with its disagreeable demands,

not because its demands have ceased, but because, through an inward rectification they have ceased to be disagreeable. The deliverance is gradual, as the work of conformity goes on; and as the latter is not complete now, so only in heaven do we attain completely "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." This is so well said by another, that I cannot do better than quote his words.\* "This law, (the law of moral good, the law which teaches men how they ought to live, and how they ought not,) is not made for good men, but for evil. It is so manifest that strict rules are required, just exactly in proportion to our inability or want of will to rule ourselves; it is so very plain that with regard to those crimes which we are under no temptation to commit, we feel exactly as if there were no law. Which of us ever thinks, as a matter of personal concern, of the law which condemns murderers or housebreakers, or those who maliciously set fire to their neighbour's property? Do we not feel, that as far as our conduct is concerned, it would be exactly the same if no such law were in existence? We should no more murder, or rob, or set fire to houses and barns, if the law were wholly done away, than we do now that it is in force. It is dead to us, and we are at liberty under it. And there is no doubt also, that the same freedom from the law, which we ourselves experience daily in respect to some particular great crimes, (for as I said, we do not feel that it is fear of the law which keeps us from murder and robbing,) that very same freedom is felt by

\* Dr. Arnold's Sermons.

good men in many other points, where it may be that we ourselves do not feel it. A common instance may be given with respect to prayer and the outward worship of God. There are a great many who feel this as a duty; but there are also many to whom it is not so much a duty, as a privilege and a pleasure, and these are dead to the law which commands us to be instant in prayer, just as we in general are dead to the law which commands us to do no murder. This being understood, it will be perfectly plain why St. Paul, along with all his language as to the law being passed away, and our becoming dead to it, yet uses very frequently language of another kind, which shows that the law is not dead in itself, but lives, and ever will live. He says, 'We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive according to what he hath done in the body.' And he adds, 'Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.' But the judgment and terror of the Lord, mean precisely what are meant by the law. And this language of St. Paul shows most clearly, that unless we are first dead to the law, the law is not and never will be dead to us."

On the whole, it appears there is no liberty for man to be found, but in loving his service thoroughly, so that its cause becomes his own. The Lord Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light:"—that is, though it is a yoke and a burden, it is easy and light to such as take it voluntarily, love it, and are taught of him to wear it cheerfully and happily,—to such as come to him for

pardon, and, in faith and heartfelt gratitude, devote themselves to him, admit his Spirit into their hearts, and are led by it into all holy and obedient ways. This is liberty—loving God's service; and the gospel is the law of liberty, inasmuch as, having first, by its powerful grace and persuasive motives, implanted that love, it rules its subjects afterwards, with the silken cords of a willing, tractable, submissive, loyal spirit.

II. The gospel is a law of liberty, in respect to its mode of legislating for men. A free-will service is always a profuse and generous one; and as the gospel produces, expects and accepts only a free-will service, it deals with its subjects accordingly, as with beings who will have no inclination to economize and stint their service, and dole it out in the very scantiest measures that will answer the literal terms of demand. It does not look for close construction and parsimonious obedience in its subjects, but supposes them to be inflamed with a love of duty, and directed by a spirit of liberal and affectionate loyalty.

The law, we have had occasion to say already, is immutable. It is so in its fundamental principles and general requirements:—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart,"—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,"—"On these two commandments hang all the law." So "it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." But, the particular modes in which this spirit of obedience acts, especially in those departments of conduct of which God is the immediate object, religious profession, worship and discipline, differ according to the character of the dis-



pensations to which they pertain. The positive and ritual directions of the old law were numerous, minute, circumstantial, precise and rigid. St. Paul calls it a "law of commandments contained in ordinances," and scruples not to denominate it "a yoke of bondage," and to speak of it as only fit for men in a state of minority and pupilage. And St. Peter declares it to be "a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." There is nothing trustful and confiding about it. It leaves no room for the exercise of discretion; it confides nothing to the generous promptings of a willing mind. And such a way of ruling fitted the extent in which the grace and mercy of God were then disclosed. Now, we do not mean to say that piety under the old, and under the new law, are different things,—the one marked with servility and fear, the other with willingness and love,—for we cannot conceive that God was ever pleased with any but a cordial and voluntary service. But then, as the motives and helps to such a service were then fewer and weaker, so the spirit of it must have been ordinarily feebler, and therefore have had more need to be reinforced by formal and precise directions. So we find it. But since "grace and truth have come by Jesus Christ," we may expect more spontaneousness in men's obedience, and therefore less of direct, authoritative legislation to them. So again we find it.

The careful and candid reader of the New Testament will not doubt that there is involved in it an outline of an ecclesiastical system, a church, ministry, ordinances and worship. But there are few details, and

no extended portraiture. What is taught comes not ordinarily in the shape of an injunction or a statute. We find it in allusions, in records of apostolic practice, and in incidental references. There are very few institutions or practices of the church for which an imperative injunction can be shown. And there are many people, who, on that very account, slight the positive parts of religion; and some of them think they evince their spirituality by it. But they show in fact the bondage of their minds, that they "serve in the oldness of the letter," that they have no such delight in serving God as will make them heed hinting, and bend themselves to compliance, if, by any means, they can discover so much as a probability, that any course is pleasing to God,—that, in fine, generosity is a scanty ingredient in their religion. For the mind of God, in these respects, though it be not shaped into a precept, is discoverable by a teachable spirit. And to such a spirit this will be law. The gospel legislates in moral matters also, somewhat in the same fashion. It tells men to practise self-denial, and not to be conformed to this world. But it draws out no detailed account of particulars to be renounced and avoided. It leaves men largely to the exercise of discretion, to determine for themselves what those things are which are contrary to God's will and glory, and thereupon to forego and avoid them. Remonstrate with many people against such a practice, or such an indulgence, and they will call upon you for the chapter and verse in which it is forbidden, and feel triumphant, if you cannot show it. Yet, they know in themselves that it

does harm, and interferes with God's glory, and so is contrary to his will, and falls under some general head of prohibition. One cannot help fearing that such persons are restrained in other less questionable things by nothing but the statute; and that they would sin grossly, if there were no law to the contrary. At any rate, there can be very little that is affectionate and free-hearted in such goodness. The gospel aims to bring up men's dispositions to a conformity to God's law, and so to emancipate them from it as a yoke, by making it a gentle and valued directory. And it gives directions to men upon the supposition that its design herein is accomplished by hints and suggestions, judging, and I am sure, rightly, that to a right-minded man, it is a real pleasure to study or guess out his Heavenly Father's will, and conform himself to it; because it gratifies his grateful heart to feel that he can render some service which is not extorted by a peremptory command. Thus the gospel is a law of liberty. We are treated as sons, not as servants, not subjected to a code of formal commands, but addressed as those who love God and wish to please him. "When a man gives orders to those who he thinks will mistake him, or are perverse, he speaks pointedly and explicitly; but when he gives directions to friends, he will trust much to their knowledge of his feelings and wishes; he leaves much to their discretion, and tells them not so much what he would have done in detail, as what are the objects he would have accomplished. Now this is the way Christ has spoken to us under the New Covenant; and apparently with this reason, to try us, whether or

not we really love him, as our Lord and Saviour." "The question which a reverend and affectionate faith will ask, is, what is most likely to please Christ; and this is just the question that obtains an answer in Scripture, which contains just so much as intimations of what is most likely to please him."\*

You see, then, how the service of God is to become freedom to you, namely, by imbibing the love of it in your heart, and conforming your wills to its precepts. It will never relax or change; "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle" of it will not withdraw its claim; you can never shake your neck free from the obligation to obey it. "The Son must make you free" by "renewing you in the spirit of your minds." This is all the deliverance you can have. And you may have it, if you will. If in your guilt, weakness and misery, you will look to Christ, and commit yourself to him for salvation, there shall such a sentiment of gratitude and love spring up within you, as shall make you, indeed, new creatures. His cross and his Spirit shall make you love the law of God, and rejoice to keep it. "His yoke will be easy, and his burden will be light," while you walk at liberty—"followers of God as dear children,"—in "the spirit of adoption."

And ye, who think that you "have passed from death unto life," try yourselves by this standard. What is the character and spirit of your obedience? Is it cheerful, generous, ready, pleasant? Is it your desire to know what God would have you to do, and to

\* Tracts for the Times, No. 8.

do it? Do you welcome hints, intimations and probabilities of duty? It is an evil sign of Christian people to see them always hovering on the very verge of positive impropriety and disobedience, casting a wishful eye into Satan's territory, and arguing with the world for the last inch of debatable ground between them. Oh! rather let your doings and renunciations for Christ be generous. "For your sakes He became poor." In return, be willing to do much and renounce much, and with light and willing heart, take up your cross and follow him.

## SERMON XXIII.

## THE DAILY CROSS.

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me. ST. LUKE, ix. 23.

CHRISTIAN men do not seem to remember, that the cross which they are required to take up, is a daily cross. They are greatly prone to regard themselves as called to endure its pressure only on rare and uncommon occasions, and permitted to go free from it ordinarily. The taking up of the cross savours of martyrdom. Christians are not apt to think themselves called to martyrdom. That is the unenviable honour of a few choice spirits of extraordinary times. Much less do they dream of such a thing as an habitual, a life-long martyrdom; and yet our Saviour really speaks as though he meant that all his disciples should be martyrs, and the whole "general assembly and church of the first-born," a "noble army of martyrs." For the evangelist is careful to tell us that "he said to them all." And he himself is pointedly particular and comprehensive,—“If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross.” And this martyrdom was to be customary, protracted, unceasing. The cross was to be taken up daily. Not a single day of any disciple's life should pass without calls and occasions for cross-bearing. For not one day of all his sojourn below,

could any Christian innocently and consistently refuse the painful burden, or disencumber himself of the instrument of his appointed torture. When the cross is no longer on his shoulder, he has ceased to follow Christ; and with the escape from the disciple's trial, he has undergone the forfeiture of the disciple's hope. "No cross, no crown." So that daily cross-bearing appears to be an invariable, indispensable, essential characteristic of the Christian life. It is wherever that life is. It extends through every step and stage of that life. It endures as long as that life lasts.

If any man shall be disposed to accuse us of clothing religion with a forbidding and melancholy aspect, we answer, That is not our fault: we cannot help it. We have received our message: we deliver it. We speak the very words of One, who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest: take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls;"—of a Book, which nevertheless affirms of heavenly Wisdom, that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

If any are inquisitive to know how this perpetual cross-bearing, this constant living in the spirit of a martyr, and in painful proximity to the actual endurances of a martyr, can be rest and pleasantness and peace, we fear we could afford them no satisfactory solution. Christianity is full of paradoxes, inexplicable in words, fully harmonized and solved in experience and practice. Try it, and you will quickly learn how its sweet and bitter ingredients blend and agree. "The

natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Conversion is the best solution of difficulties, the best exposition of mysteries, the best reconciliation of contradictions. We will only suggest, that a man may live both an inner and an outer life, and that these may not always be harmonious. He may simultaneously have joys in the one, and griefs in the other, nay, the griefs may be the condition of the joys; so that if the griefs cease, the joys perish too. And then, he may endure the griefs cheerfully for the sake of the joys; nay, court and cherish them, and mourn their diminution or departure. And the joys may be of so rich and precious a quality as to compensate the griefs that generate and sustain them a thousand fold; so that a man may be the greatest of losers by losing his griefs, because with them he inevitably loses his pleasures. And though the griefs be real and undesirable of themselves, yet, for the sake of their gracious companions, they may be even lovely and amiable, the harbingers and occasions of delights the best that man can know on earth, in the enjoyment of which, the alloy, that tempers them while it also authorizes them, is gratefully welcomed. Oh! there are griefs which a wise man would not willingly miss. This statement is true in regard to religion. If any of you desire a clearer and more satisfactory knowledge, we advise you to seek it by experiment.

Cross-bearing then, it seems, is an ordinary and constant feature of a religious life. To this point we intend particularly to direct your attention.

Now if the cross is to be borne daily, and the bearing



of the cross is a part of the Christian's daily business and service, then it follows, that the Christian's life contains daily occasions for bearing the cross; that its plan is so constructed, and its course so ordered, as to afford opportunity for the performance of this duty every day; that no day passes without bringing seasons more or less numerous, when the Christian, if he be faithfully meeting the call of his Master, complying with his gracious will, and fulfilling the conditions of discipleship, will be taking up and bearing the cross. It is a great mistake to suppose that occasions for this painful species of service occur only at distant intervals and in a few marked instances. They come daily, hourly, almost momentarily. And it is no ways improbable that some quiet, cheerful Christian, in his diurnal round of customary duties, is uncomplainingly doing tasks and meeting trials, unseen and unsuspected, or in the eyes of beholders not difficult or painful, in the spirit of a martyr, tasks and trials notwithstanding so frequent and so disagreeable as to make his life an incessant martyrdom. How seldom indeed is there a day, not to say an hour, in which there is not something to be done or something to be borne from which nature revolts and craves to be excused? And in multitudes of such instances there is a way of escape from them, which is often eagerly embraced, when yet it is manifestly the will of Christ that there should not be an escape. Or if they are not escaped, it is because they could not be; and they are encountered grudgingly, sullenly or peevishly, not patiently and submissively. Now to meet these calls to unpleasant labour and endurance promptly and faith-

fully, is to bear the cross; to disobey them if possible, and if not, receive them reluctantly and doggedly, is to refuse the cross. And thus man's spirit is brought to the test very frequently; and the attitude of his heart towards "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God," is many times every day tried and displayed. It is this arrangement and structure of human life that makes it a probation, a perpetual series of experiments, by which God examines his creature "to humble and to prove him, to know what is in his heart, whether he will keep his commandments or no."

Nor is experiment all or chief. Discipline is a still higher design and effect. Every instance of compliance nourishes the principles of faith, love, loyalty and obedience in the soul. Every instance of refusal or compulsory conformity enfeebles and relaxes that spirit, or indicates its absence. We know not what injury we are doing to our souls, when we are yielding to our indolence, our pusillanimity, our avarice, our love of pleasure and of ease, what fatal wounds we are inflicting on our best interests, what alarming proofs we are giving that either "the love of the Father is not in us," or is lamentably weak. We think we are not refusing the cross because it is not tendered to us; and suppose, that if any trying juncture should arise to prove our attachment and fidelity, we "should not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and fight manfully under his banner;" while we are all the while retreating before the most insignificant enemies. The cross is tendered to us every hour of our waking moments, laid upon our shoulder, and we are showing

how we are affected towards Christ by being patient or restiff under it. There is no hour that does not bring some opportunity and invitation to deny ourselves for Christ and duty and eternity. Oh! we are not, I am sure we cannot be, sensible of the moral meanings and operations that mix up continually with life's common warp and woof. We say with St. Peter, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee to prison and to death," and then quail at the question of a maiden.

What gives this truth greater importance is, that these minor trials furnish a much more effectual and decisive criterion of our characters than seemingly greater occasions. This is because the heart acts under them more promptly, spontaneously and freely, and is less liable to be swayed unconsciously by secondary considerations acting in the same line with the claims of duty, and by their success blinding us to our deficiency in a really dutiful spirit. Mr. Melvill, commenting on our Lord's sending his disciples into the city, to find the place appointed by him for keeping the passover, by following a man whom they should meet bearing a pitcher of water, says very happily and forcibly, "The apparent meanness of an employment will often try faith more than its apparent difficulty; the exposure to ridicule and contempt will require greater moral nerve than the exposure to danger and death. How should it be otherwise when genuine humility is among the hardest things to acquire and maintain; and when, consequently, whatsoever goes directly to the mortifying pride will more touch men to the quick, than any amount of effort, or of sacrifice, round

which, it may be, is thrown something of a lofty or chivalrous aspect? Oh! do not tell us of great faith as required only for the following Christ bearing his cross—there was great faith required also for the following the man bearing the pitcher of water. Tell us not of its being a hard task to go in unto Pharaoh and say, ‘Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go,’ it was a hard task also to go in unto the stranger and say, ‘Thus saith the Master, Where is the guest-chamber?’ We believe that it is very frequently ordered that faith should be disciplined and nurtured for its hardest endurances, and its highest achievements, through exposure to petty inconveniences, collisions with mere rudeness, the obloquy of the proud, the sneer of the supercilious, and the incivility of the ignorant. Men have looked wonderingly, as some unflinching confessor, some candidate for the bloody crown of martyrdom, has stepped forth from ranks which had only simple duties to perform and common trials to face, and displayed a constancy, and a courage, surpassing those exhibited by Christians trained in higher schools of experience. But they have forgotten, or they have not known, that nowhere is faith so well disciplined as in humble occupations, that it grows great through little tasks, and may be more exercised by being kept to the menial business of a servant, than by being summoned to the lofty standing of a leader. They have forgotten, or they have not known, that the uncourteous repulses, the ungracious slights, the contemptuous insults, to which a Christian may be exposed in acting out his Christianity in every day life, and amidst the most common-place circum-

stances, put his principles to severe proof, or keep them in full work ; and that the very fact of his having moved in so humble a sphere, and been plied with trials so unostentatious and petty, has had the direct tendency to harden him for conflict, ay, though it might be 'with principalities and powers.' "

We see then, that the great means of the Christian man's probation and discipline is his daily cross, not the few great trials that befall him at distant intervals, but the tasks and vexations that are incident to his daily walk, his ordinary circumstances, relations and employments. We may never in all our lives be called to any enormous effort or crushing endurance, but may keep the even tenor of our way through only moderate labours, and sorrows "such as are common unto men ;" and yet our principles be subjected to a continual strain, by which their quality and strength are sufficiently and effectually tested. There shall be no day of all that gentle and uniform course, which shall not furnish abundant occasions to try our temper and our fortitude and our resolution and our faith, in which we shall not be brought to combat with "temptation without and corruptions within," in which there shall not be numerous conflicts between "the law of our members" and "the law of our mind," between "the flesh" and "the Spirit," between conscience and the will of God, and our own indolence and pride and timidity and squeamishness and irritability, our love of ease or of pleasure ; and the mastery of the one or of the other creates a daily balance in favour of duty or selfishness, obedience or sin. And many a man fails in these fa-

miliar instances, who would do bravely in some juncture that should summon him to stupendous exertion or intense suffering. At such a time many inferior motives might come to the aid of his feeble principle, and bear it through in triumph; while, in more common cases, he succumbs without a struggle, and is scarcely aware that any trial of principle is involved in the contest. Many a man would make a martyr, who is not a very exemplary or faithful Christian. But then, since principle does not sustain him on common occasions, who can say that it is not something else than principle that would support him in the fiercer trial—pride, fanaticism, natural hardihood, or the love of posthumous glory? The very fact that ordinary circumstances do not call a man to think of his principles, but to use them, goes far to show their reality when they prove sufficient; for where the importance of the occasion is such as to set him thinking upon it, it is not improbable that the pride of place and consistency may maintain him in a brave conformity to a principle, which is proper to his position or profession, but little familiar to his heart. There is many a man that would repel a Sanballat's treachery with a Nehemiah's—"Should such a man as I flee?" who would yet be utterly incapable of a Nehemiah's habitual trials and sacrifices.

It is worthy of particular notice, that this daily cross is strictly an individual thing, and varies with the disposition and circumstances of those to whom it pertains. Every man has his own cross, which he can no more get rid of or exchange with another than he can his own identity. "The heart knoweth its own bitter-

ness." This cross, in every instance, consists of that peculiar difficulty which any person experiences in doing and bearing the will of God; and how various that is, any one may know, who will reflect upon the infinite variety of men's constitutions and conditions. Thus, what is a cross to one man is no cross to another; because, from a difference of tastes and habits, it may be no hardship to him to bear or to do it. Not unfrequently, a man's cross for the most part lies in something which is invisible to all but himself, or which if seen by others is not understood by them to be his cross, because it would not be a cross to them. It may be, that I am by my peculiar circumstances perpetually called to some course of action; which, to a person of my particular temperament, is excessively disagreeable. But others, who are not similarly constituted, may not so much as imagine how much my duty costs me. I suppose, indeed, that it is no uncommon thing for a man's cross to consist in something which nobody but himself supposes to be any part of his cross at all. It may be a very minute matter indeed, which is a man's "thorn in the flesh" all his days. The bigness of a thing does not determine its painfulness. A very little brier in the flesh may be the cause of long and cruel irritation. An irritable man is tried with temptations to anger, a sensual man with provocations of appetite, a proud man with incentives to pride. A man's associates, the men with whom he is continually brought into contact in intercourse and business, are usually to no small extent sources of trial to him. There is not seldom in that circle which bounds a man's

sphere of duty, some coarse or wayward or jealous disposition, which is an incessant source of annoyance to him in his unavoidable collisions with it. We have not told the half. Each of you might furnish instances out of the treasures of his own experience. There is some place in every man's case which is habitually tender, and some object near him against which it frequently impinges; and to bear his pain patiently, and in spite of it do his duty resolutely in the spirit of a Christian disciple, is to take up his cross daily and follow Christ.

My Christian brethren, I fear you may not understand aright this matter of taking up the cross. I trust you now perceive that is a daily duty, a duty to which no day fails to furnish an occasion, and utter a summons. It consists simply in bearing inevitable evils patiently, and doing unpleasant duties faithfully, out of faith in the Lord's wisdom, and obedience to his will. It is opposed to that indolence and fretfulness in which we are so apt to indulge, that readiness to invent excuses for the neglect of disagreeable duties, or discover reasons for postponing them, that unwillingness to practise self-denial, or put forth adequate exertions for the relief of human distress, the welfare of souls, or the prosperity of the church, that impatience under the appointments of providence, that discontent, despondency, peevishness, anxiety and restlessness, in fine, that reluctance to do and suffer the will of God concerning us, which so little agrees with the spirit of filial trust and obedience.

Let it be impressed upon you, then, that what the



gospel requires of you, is not to take up the cross now and then, when some huge task or mighty calamity falls upon you, tasks and calamities which you may perhaps hope to escape altogether, and thus to get off with only a theoretical taking up of the cross, but to take up your cross daily, a cross which daily offers itself to you to be taken up, by the patient performance of the labours and meek endurance of the burdens of your station, labours and burdens irksome and painful in themselves to a wide extent, which yet the love of Christ and the hope of heaven can lighten and sweeten. Work and endure while the day lasts. Soon the toil and conflict shall be over; and then, blessed thought! "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat, but the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from off their faces."

## SERMON XXIV.

## CHRIST'S PASSION MONITORY.

For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?—ST. LUKE XXIII. 31.

THIS strong and expressive metaphor gains additional force from the circumstances under which it was uttered. In the light of these circumstances its meaning is plain. But while they serve to illustrate its sense, and strengthen its effect, they by no means limit its application, or circumscribe its utility. To us it speaks as truly and as significantly as it did to those who heard it from the lips of Jesus. The things referred to in the text were inflictions of shame and distress, penal sufferings of the most aggravated and ignominious description bestowed as the penalty of guilt on One who therein was dealt with as a criminal and malefactor, a penalty, which, as though it were not enough to extinguish life, and destroy forever whatever of happiness or hope might accompany its possession, seemed devised for the very purpose of making death in a high degree painful and horrible, awful far beyond its own intrinsic and invariable dreadfulness.

And these things were being done, to adopt the figure of the text, in a green tree. A tree in all its verdure and vigour and beauty, untried by disease, with its life perfect in it, impaired by no previous de-

cay or violence, which had not fallen before the axe of the feller, the blast of the elements, or the flight of years, in the midst of its growth, with its leaves fresh upon it, and the moist sap running freely in its stock and pervading its limbs, was withering and consuming in a flame so fierce as to be utterly irresistible. Its natural inaptitude to burn afforded it no protection. The fire was devouring it like stubble. A dry tree is fit fuel. Its life extinct and its moisture exhaled, it waits only the application of the brand, to yield itself a suitable and ready victim. It is the proper prey of fire, invites it, as it were, offers itself to its approaches, and bears its own sentence and doom upon its front. When the conflagration for which it has been waiting seizes it, no feeling of injustice or incongruity or sympathy or regret is awakened in the beholder. Its fate excites no grief; and the attention which it receives is called forth not by the strangeness, but by the splendour, of the spectacle. The mind acquiesces in it as an appropriate and not undesirable event, a fit and welcome riddance of an unsightly, useless, perhaps threatening, incumbrance. I entertain a feeling nearly akin to respect and affection for trees. The aspect of a familiar tree is as the face of an old friend. An aged tree, whose story is known, standing a monument and survivor of generations that have lived and passed away from beneath its shadow, fresh and firm after the hands of them who planted it and rejoiced in it, and their children, and their children's children, have vanished from the places that knew them, is full of historical and poetic interest; and he who can look upon it

without some stirring of thought and feeling in reference to it, as the dumb chronicler of scenes and changes which it has witnessed and outlived and only wants a tongue to relate, must have a soul singularly barren and unsusceptible. I never see a living tree cut down without a feeling that strongly resembles compassion and resentment. My sense of right and propriety is at least gently stirred. And I cannot but think, that all but sordid minds, your men of mere dollars and cents, mere incarnations of money, will recognise and respect the feeling. If such a tree were to become the prey of fire, it would seem to be a sacrifice. As leaf and twig shrivels, bough after bough disappears, and at last the huge trunk bends crackling and glowing to the earth, it likens itself to a giant burnt-offering to the demon of destruction, exulting in his victory over its beauty and strength. But a dry tree who cares for? We may be sorry that it died. But since it is dead, the axe and the flame are welcome to their victim. They do a befitting and useful work, in removing an object which no longer can afford pleasure or advantage, productive neither of fruit nor shade, only cumbering space with deformity and decay. Now, I suppose that some such ideas lie at the bottom of the figure in the text. If the green tree, not apt to burn, nor deserving the doom of fire, is nevertheless devoted to the flame, how shall the dry tree, inflammable, and waiting only the spark to kindle it, meet moreover for no better fate, hope to escape a conflagration more violent, rapid and thorough?

Our Lord uttered the words before us while he was

going from the judgment hall of Pilate to the place of crucifixion. They rank therefore among his dying words; for from the moment when in the garden of Gethsemane he meekly resigned himself to the fate which his Father had appointed for him, he may be considered as having begun to die. He had given himself up into the hands of the destroyer, and was quietly undergoing the accomplishment of his work. All that follows is a death scene; and all that was said in it has the peculiar sacredness and interest that pertain to the sayings of a dying man, especially, of a martyr and a Redeemer. St. Luke tells us that, "there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." Then, after predicting the approach of calamities so severe that mothers would be moved, at the sight of their children's miseries, and by the consequent augmentation of their own, to envy and congratulate the childless, he adds, "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us! and to the hills, Cover us." There is here evident reference to the words of Hosea—\* "And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us! and to the hills, Fall on us!"—spoken originally in view of the distress that would accompany the Assyrian invasion. The same figure is borrowed by St. John in the Apocalypse to describe the anguish and consternation that were to follow the opening of the sixth seal: when, high and humble without distinction, terror-stricken, are

\* Hos. x. 8.

made to \* “hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!” The representation in all the cases is evidently intended to depict an occasion of extreme desperation and insufferable horror, such as only attend some peculiarly clear and impressive display of God’s wrath against sin. As employed by our Lord, it undoubtedly points to the horrors of the Roman conquest, which he had before foretold in language of similar intensity: † “There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be,”—a description which the history of that awful catastrophe most perfectly justifies and fulfils. Then he subjoins the remark which furnishes the text,—“For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry”—in which his own intense sufferings, then being endured, are made the pledge of those dreadful calamities which should ere long overtake his nation.

In his passion God’s displeasure at sin was displayed, its fearfulness made known. Yet he was, in character, sinless; in nature, divine. His sufferings were without desert. In his person moreover human nature was specially ennobled,—exalted into a tabernacle of divinity—taken into such a close and intimate alliance with the Godhead, and thus, so deified as it were, that it would seem to have been entitled to an exemption from the common ills and ordinary fate of flesh, and to stand

\* Rev. vi. 16.

† Matt. xxiv. 21.

upon an eminence that would effectually secure it against the assaults of evil. Pain is the penalty of sin; but he had done no sin, was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;" and therefore he might seem to be safe also from the pains of sinners. He was "God manifest in the flesh," "the Son of man in heaven" even while he dwelt and walked on earth, a heavenly and divine visitant, veiled in an adopted humanity just for the purpose of intercourse with earthly beings and performing an earthly work. God cannot suffer. A heavenly being has no liability to pain. We should be apt to surmise; that, as a nature celestial, above all, divine, would remain impassible during any temporary sojourn it might make among terrestrial scenes and beings, even if, for the fulfilment of some mission of wisdom or mercy, it had assumed their nature into union with itself, it would be more likely to communicate its own immunity from harm to the flesh it dignified with its presence, than to draw upon the person which a union so mysterious might produce, the liability to suffer which pertained only to its inferior and more yielding element. The suffering of Christ was a great incongruity. Never did pain fasten on so unmeet an object. Never was misery so strangely associated, so improperly lodged, guest in so unsuitable a mansion. Yet he did suffer, was suffering when he spake, had been suffering in degree ever since he was "made in the likeness of man," through all the thirty-three years of his earthly sojourn, was now in the midst of a process of suffering extreme in its character,

deadly in its issue, about to "pour out his soul unto death," amidst the agony and torture of the cross.

The fire had seized upon a green tree, and in all its strength and beauty, its moisture and freshness, was wasting it with a strange and unnatural destruction. The wrath of God against sin, strangely had fastened on the only man that was not a sinner; and the indignation of Him, who to sin alone is a "consuming fire," was marvellously devouring that one thing which, alone of all things on earth, was perfectly free from that against which its fury was excited. But the green tree was standing, the only green tree in all the forest, surrounded on all sides by dry trees, sapless, leafless, lifeless, "twice dead, plucked up by the roots," fit for the fire, and ready to yield themselves to its destructive attacks so soon as it should approach them. They were candidates for burning, good for nothing but fuel, "nigh unto destruction, whose end was to be burned"—an end altogether natural, congruous, justifiable. When the green tree was burning, should not the dry tree be admonished of its peril? Should it not see a foretokening of its own fate, a fate so much more probable, more becoming, more merited? The Jewish nation was a "vessel of wrath fitted for destruction," without moral or physical preparation to resist the fury of the divine anger. Their iniquity was well nigh full. They were rapidly "filling up the measure of their fathers." If any thing were wanting to consummate their guilt, it was furnished in their crucifying the Lord of life and glory, and imprecating his blood upon themselves and their children. They



were puffed up with a sense of spiritual exaltation as the favoured people; but they were but men, perishable "as the flower, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven." Soon the "wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost," and "devoured them as stubble fully dry." Never did a people experience a more complete and signal destruction, rapid, fierce and thorough. The things that were done in the green tree were thus in due time done in the dry. For centuries nothing has remained of it but a few scathed boughs and blackened fragments strewed abroad and trampled under foot, to attest that once it was, and was most justly and awfully consumed.

That we may turn these facts to practical account, it is needful that we notice two things.

The first is, God's treatment of the Jews is a token of his displeasure against sin generally, and his determination to punish it in men with an awful severity. The particular temporal judgments of God are preludes of his general, final, eternal judgment. If his wrath can burn so fiercely and so destructively on earth, how fearfully will it rage in the day of the revelation of his righteous judgment? It is a suppressed and bridled wrath now; what will it be when it will operate without mitigation or restraint? He does "not suffer his whole displeasure to arise;" and yet, oftentimes, how terrible are its manifestations! God's hatred of sin is steady, intense, eternal. The plagues he inflicts on guilty nations and individuals are but scintillations on its heat, short and attempered explosions of its violence. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living

God." "Great plagues remain for the ungodly." "For a fire is kindled in his anger that shall burn to the lowest hell."

The second is, that Christ affords protection from the wrath of God to those only, who, by compliance with appointed terms, secure to themselves the benefits of his atonement. We are engaged in looking at the sufferings of Christ as monitory; it is more common and more agreeable to regard them as propitiatory, as endured to procure for sinners the means and opportunity of pardon. This was, no doubt, their direct aim and operation. The minds of men are so enamoured of this view, that they are apt to let it engross the whole field of vision. But there are other things in the field, and we do well to look at them. There are conditions as well as provisions. He saves the penitent; but "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." He "saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by him;" but if "they will not come unto him that they may have life," they "shall die in their sins;" and then, "where he is they cannot come." All such as will not believe on him and obey him are left as utterly without defence from "the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," as though he had never died; and are "condemned already, because they have not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

The subject thus unfolded becomes to us a lesson of patience, of prudence, and of hope.

The Son of God on earth was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." His life was marked by

suffering in all its stages. His death was accomplished amidst an accumulation of miseries,—imbittered with desolation, disgrace and torment. These things were done in the green tree. He had no meetness for such sufferings; there was no natural propriety in their infliction upon him, no demerit that rendered them the just reward of his deeds. Yet “it pleased the Lord to bruise him.” What then shall be done in the dry? Suffering has a most melancholy congruity to our case. We have no claim to anything better, deserve nothing else. We are sinners. We have forfeited all good. Evil is all the inheritance that is left to us. We could have no right to complain, if all our days were consumed in sorrows; for “why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” Yet we are spared, favoured, blessed, oh how richly! We cannot say that we “have not where to lay our heads.” We have homes, and they are homes of plenty and comfort, in many cases, of luxury and elegance. “Our cup runneth over.” And in addition to all our temporal comforts, we have the knowledge of the truth, “the means of grace, and the hope of glory.” Yet how we murmur over our wants, our inconveniences, our vexations, our trials! Oh! ye that deserve much suffering and endure little, think of Him who endured much and deserved none, lay your hand upon your mouths, and be still.

Again, think how dangerous it must be to brave the anger of the long-suffering God. “Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire,

and the rocks are thrown down by him." God's enmity to sin is seen in the severity with which he treated even his own Son, when that Son voluntarily placed himself in the position of a sinner, and underwent the usage of a sinner. And will he deal more mildly with those who are sinners really? above all, with those who are sinners obstinately, and would not be pardoned and reclaimed? Christ suffered that you might not suffer. There is protection in his blood. The destroying angel passes over the lintel on which that blood is sprinkled. But there is no protection without him; nay, augmented exposure, augmented peril. "Behold then the goodness and the severity of God;" goodness in Christ, severity out of Christ. Take warning not to brave God's anger. You shrink under its gentle touches now. It will be sharper hereafter. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how wilt thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

Finally, there is opened to us by the sufferings of Christ a door of hope and salvation. These things were done in the green tree, not arbitrarily nor wantonly, but in wisdom and love. The green tree consented to burn that the dry tree might escape, nay, more than that, that, by the wonderful efficacy of this destruction, it might become again green, lively and flourishing. These things shall not be done in the dry tree, if what was done in the green tree is graciously accepted in lieu of them. It was done that it might be. But

here our metaphor fails us. It is the case of living, rational, voluntary creatures which we are contemplating. We have the fullest assurance that God will pardon, sanctify and save us, if we believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and serve him with true and faithful hearts. "For if God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" If we are destroyed at all, my brethren, we are self-destroyed. God willeth not our death. His Son dying on the cross declares his boundless compassion and mercy towards us. "Behold!" says he, "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

## SERMON XXV.

## CHRIST'S HEAVENLY LIFE.

He shall live.—PSALM LXXII. 15.

THIS whole Psalm unquestionably has reference to Christ; for there is no other to whom its statements and descriptions can be fairly applied. The prediction before us evidently relates to that life of his which he gained by his resurrection from the dead; for, in the verses that follow, it is described as ceaseless and eternal, free from all exposure to interruption, decay and mortality. His resurrection from the dead was his induction into this new and more glorious form of life. This he first attained, when he “loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be holden of it.” For, “Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.” This was a life such as he had not known before, different alike from the life that he had lived in the flesh, and from that glory which he had with his Father before he was made man; more glorious than the former,—we dare not say, more glorious than the latter, for that were to insinuate that a bliss properly divine is capable of augmentation, or to undeify its subject,—but we may say intelligently,

nay, we must say, possessed of some new and peculiar elements of glory, which did not and could not enter into the first glory which he had, and relinquished. It was a life of glorification, altogether novel to his human part, which before had known nothing but weakness and humiliation, and, in important respects, also novel to the divine, which it invested with new relations, new functions and new dignities. To the compound person Immanuel, "the Word made flesh," it was a great and important advance of honour, brightly indeed contrasting with that condition out of which he had emerged—a state of poverty, meanness, disgrace and suffering issuing in a state of power, happiness, splendour and inconceivable exaltation. "God highly exalted him, and gave him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." To this life Isaiah refers, when, in language parallel to the text, he prophesies, that when God hath made "his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;" and that then, "he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." By the Prophet this is explicitly stated as the sequel, consequence, fruit, reward, of his humiliation

and death. The Psalmist views it nakedly and separately, making the Messiah's life continuous, dropping out of view the short, dark eclipse which it temporarily suffered, essential indeed to the accomplishment of its purpose, fraught with the most pregnant benefits to mankind, needful to the attainment of its ultimate magnificence, but brief in duration, insignificant in the comparative place which it occupies in the whole history, and joyfully overlooked by one whose aim is only to portray Immanuel's glories, and describe the final benefits and honours of his reign. "He shall live." Yes, this the Psalmist declared, when he foresaw how transient the victory of the grave over him was to be, how little it could do to arrest and interrupt the continuity of his illustrious and beneficent existence, how indeed it would by means of its own temporary success become subservient to his triumph, and be forced to render his immortal honours more manifest and complete. Its realization the angel announced very significantly to the women who stood weeping at the door of his vacant sepulchre, in the suggestive question, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" He made death the instrument of attaining a higher and more perfect life. The grave was to him the mere aurelia, out of which the life that was in him was to be evolved more perfectly, and emerge in a nobler form. When he died he bruised the serpent's head, in vengeance for the wound inflicted on his heel, which was the utmost injury that could be done him. On the cross "he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." "Through death



he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;" and, by asserting his superiority to its power, successfully "abolished death, brought life and immortality to light," and proclaimed his ability to fulfil his promise to his people, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

The text, then, may be regarded as representing Christ as living, living on and forever, in defiance of death, in triumph over it, and attaining to the full development, exercise, and enjoyment of that high and glorious form of life, which forms his peculiar privilege and distinction, by means of that temporary subjection to death, through which he effected its complete discomfiture and subjugation. It thus presents us with a very fruitful and profitable subject of reflection, altogether suitable to the occasion on which we are assembled.\*

Let us then look at some of the peculiar and distinctive features of that life, which the Redeemer attained after death, and by means of it.

And first. This life is immortal. And how much this means, we shall learn best, by placing it in contrast with another form of life, with which we are better acquainted. For our Lord, previously to his going down to the grave, was mortal, and led a life, in most respects at least, like that with which we, heirs of mortality, are but too sadly familiar. For even his alliance with divinity did not operate to lift him above the ills, misfortunes and exposures, incident to that style of life which he had graciously assumed. "For as much as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;" and, in his

\* Easter Day.

generous condescension, he refrained from a participation in nothing that was proper to the nature he had taken upon him, but was "in all things made like unto his brethren."

Now, how much mortality means we know full well; we see it in our dying friends, we feel it in ourselves. We do nothing, we purpose nothing, we hope for nothing, without feeling "the sentence of death in ourselves," to mar our pleasure and abate our energy. Over all our prospects the dark wing of the death angel droops, and tarnishes them all with its gloomy shadow. We have nothing, without the accompanying conviction that our possession is at once brief and uncertain. And life is not only thus full of the expectation of death, but also of its preludes. There are symptoms of mortality always attending us, evidences too obtrusive and plain to be overlooked or mistaken, that we are made of dust, that we are heirs of corruption, that we are sliding back, by a process which nothing but the hand of Omnipotence stays, to our native clay, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

Our Lord's life on earth was in this respect like ours, mortal also, temporary, evanescent, ever sliding away, always ready to disappear. And his human nature was not superior to that aversion, that strong antipathy and horror, with which whatsoever is human, it might seem, cannot choose but regard the approach of its great enemy. He too had no purposes, no hopes, across which death did not throw a shadow of darkness and vanity. The realization of them lay all beyond its dreary chasm, and could only be reached by sinking

into it, and emerging, at the close of a secret, mysterious, fearful process, on its farther shore. "Verily, verily," says he, "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

But "Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more," has gained an existence liable to no such cessation, interruption, eclipse, an existence in a world whose "sun shall no more go down," where hope and purpose and exertion stretch out in unbroken certainty and continuity, and spread forth in interminable and ever growing development. There is no longer any exposure to decay or failure, to stoppage or frustration. The river of pleasure runs, and as it runs, widens, deepens, forever. There is no sickening sense of uncertainty, no painful apprehension of an end. Jesus our Lord has reached a country where life can know no change but by augmentation, the gathering of fresh strength, activity and enjoyment.

Secondly, This life is one of unmixed happiness. The present life of mortals is one of annoyance, vexation and sorrow. Jesus was mortal, and was exempt from none of the ills which afflict mortality. But oh! what a change was wrought in him by death. The grim healer, by a single stroke that seemed to destroy him, rendered him invulnerable, incapable of sorrow and suffering forever, eternally secure against their approaches. Here, "his visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." His eminence in pain entitled him to be called the "man of sorrows." But it was "for the joy that was

set before him" that he "endured the cross, despising the shame;" and now, he is "set down on the right hand of the throne of God."

Life is a good, only as it involves a capacity of enjoyment, and affords an opportunity for it. Hence the conscious existence of lost beings is not called life, but everlasting death. "It is not all of life to live." A mere continuance of being, separated from the pleasurable sense of existence which arises from inward and outward sources of satisfaction, is not desirable. Blank nihilism, dark and awful as it seems, is far better. Lost souls would count him indeed a benefactor, who should offer to extinguish the intense consciousness of existence which is only anguish, and cut the thread of their long-drawn miseries. Life, to be worthy of its name, must have happiness; and perfect life have perfect happiness.

But mortal life possesses this essential ingredient scantily. It is "full of trouble." It begins in a wail, fit prelude of the days of mourning which it ushers in. Few are there that are not tempted to say at times with the sage king: "I praised the dead that are already dead more than the living that are yet alive:" "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit;" and exclaim with the sorrowful man of Uz: "I loathe it: I would not live always." And the most philosophical view of life that we are able to take, will not persuade us out of the conviction which our natural sensibility forces upon us, that we are appointed to affliction. Earthly existence then is hardly life, so sparingly is that element afforded to it which alone makes it life.

And Jesus, though he came from a sphere of unmixed happiness, enjoyed no superiority to other men in this respect. Coming into a clime where sorrow was indigenous, accompanying with beings to whom grief is natural, he submitted to the common condition of his new abode and fellowship, and was "acquainted with grief." None of the evils which deform the state of mankind passed him over; and to some, which lightly touch ordinary men, his quicker spiritual perceptions and tenderer moral sensibilities rendered him especially liable. He "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself," and wept more for sin and the danger of transgressors, than for all the deprivations, insults and injuries which visited himself.

But death quenched his sorrows; and when he lived again, he could be said to live, in a much higher and truer sense, than it ever could be said of him before. For now the element of life was poured into his being in a much richer plenitude, yea, without stint, and so abundantly as to absorb and exterminate the meaner elements which had before oppressed and over-mastered it. And now he liveth indeed, a life whose pulses all yield delight, whose every action and occurrence is an occasion of felicity, whose current henceforward flows in one constant stream of pure, noble and unmingled pleasure. Life has escaped out of bondage to the influence of a corruptible body and an inclement and sinful world, and attained the perfect realization of its own true and glorious ideal.

Thirdly, This life is one of triumph and manifestation. Jesus lived a Saviour. This was the very mean-

ing and purpose of that peculiar form of life which he assumed by adopting "the likeness of sinful flesh." But during his continuance on earth, his success was greatly limited, and his dignity grievously obscured. The official life, for which his physical life had taken its special shape, never advanced beyond its embryo while he dwelt on earth. The multitude did not recognise it at all; and the few who looked upon it with more enlightened eyes understood it but partially. All was then crude, inceptive, ambiguous. And the same circumstances that obscured his office, also cramped him in the exercise of its functions. Indeed its principal, its most characteristic purpose could not be accomplished but by the act of dying. It was on the cross that the great labour of salvation was performed, the chief errand of his mission displayed.

But from the grave Jesus emerged with greatly augmented dignity and power, "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead," "able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him." The meaning of his life is now not dubious. No man now looks at the carpenter's son, the peasant, the wandering preacher, and finds it difficult to believe that he is "the Author of eternal salvation." The shade has passed off, the veil is removed. He stands disclosed, "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour," having "all power in heaven and in earth." He is no longer restricted, by the conditions of the imperfect and preparatory stage of his work, to do a few miracles, to shed a few beams of light on a few dark minds. He fills the throne of the universe. He sends

abroad his universal proclamation of mercy. He works by the energy of his truth and grace in all parts of the world. He shines with resplendent lustre, "the Light of the world," "the Sun of righteousness," "the bright and morning Star."

How much higher then is the style of life which the Saviour of men has reached through the process of dissolution and recovery! The temporal life was but the poor rudiment of the heavenly; in comparison of it, scarcely a life at all. In important senses death was to him the beginning of his real life; so highly improved was it by its kindly operation, as we have seen, in its durability, its character and its uses. Before, weak, unconscious, inefficient infancy, now, strong, majestic, powerful manhood; before, a worm, prone, grovelling, unsightly, now, the butterfly, alert, aerial, splendid; before, the little germ in the seed, tender and questionable, now, the sturdy oak, expanded in height and compass, strengthened into vigour and firmness. Evidently death has been a great benefactor to our Master. Let us see then, if it does not promise to perform an equally friendly office for his people.

Among his precious promises we find this: "Because I live, ye shall live also." And does not this involve all that they can desire in this respect, conformity to his death,—participation in his resurrection and its happy issues,—revival, after a temporary sleep of the flesh, a transient separation of body and spirit, to a better life, a life of endless duration, of unalloyed enjoyment, of exalted dignity and power? We are so joined to our Lord that our fortunes are one; and

whatsoever death was to him, it shall be to us. Our true life is yet to begin, to be extricated out of its present embarrassments and disadvantages, and become angelic, heavenly, divine.

Hence we draw hope and encouragement concerning the dead who "sleep in Jesus." He lives, they also live. And this word has in respect to them a much more pregnant and delightful meaning than it has in its application to us. Oh yes, life is indeed a different thing to them from our life, a far better, nobler, happier. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." The emancipated spirit soars into the pure air of paradise, up-springs into the beatific presence of God, joins the company of angels and "the spirits of just men made perfect." They are forever done with pain, weakness, fatigue, want, sorrow, fear, above all, with sin. God has wiped all tears from off their faces. Their hope is merged in vision; they have already reached the verge of the perfect consummation of bliss in body and soul, and they shall soon attain its fulness. Oh! surely, they whisper to us from their bright abodes, Weep not for me, but for yourselves.

Hence also we draw a lesson of mingled admonition and encouragement for ourselves. The whole subject exhibits to us very solemnly the importance of being united with Christ, so identified with him that his destiny may draw ours in its train, that his life may become the security and pledge of ours. If with us "to live is Christ," then "to die is gain." What admonition and encouragement is here to the adoption and



maintenance of a Christian life. The life that is to be immortally happy and honourable has its seed here, in that new life which the Spirit of God implants and nourishes in the souls of believers,—is, in fact, but its maturing, its perfection, its full development. Here it is to be begun, here it is to be nurtured, here it is to be formed and strengthened. The rough discipline, the painful service, of this transitory state are its best, its needful culture.

We recommend to you then the Christian life, the pledge of a glorious life in the realms above, the indispensable qualification for it. A worldly, a sensual life can yield none but the appropriate fruits of disappointment and misery. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

## SERMON XXVI.

## THE STATE OF THE DEAD.

Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?—JOB XIV. 10.

THE stage of human existence which intervenes between death and the resurrection, is naturally regarded by us with great curiosity and solicitude. We live not far from its borders; we are rapidly drawing near to an entrance into it; and we can never tell how soon we may be called to penetrate its secrets, and know what it is by experience. We are ever walking by the edge of a dark chasm, and know that we must ere long fathom its depths. We cannot be indifferent to their nature, or fail to be inquisitive in regard to the provision which they contain for our comfort and happiness during our long residence in their obscure recesses. Who indeed can refrain from often asking the question, What sort of a world is that to which I am going? What is the character of that existence on which I must shortly enter? To this question none but a vague and unsatisfactory answer is returned. Nature is silent, and revelation does but whisper faintly and vaguely. We are able to form a much more distinct conception of the heavenly state, than of that which immediately precedes it.

The final condition of man is much more analogous

to his present state, than that which intervenes between the two. At death we enter upon a disembodied state of being, a state of life purely spiritual and immaterial. Of this we have no knowledge from experience or observation; and we can form no clear and satisfactory conception of it. We are so accustomed to the use of material organs and instruments, that we cannot understand how we can do without them. Incorporeal life seems to us impotent, cheerless, naked, unreal. We shrink from the fearful experiment of it. Even St. Paul, in the longing and rapturous expectation of immortality which filled him, interjected, "Not for that we would be unclothed." The life that leaves the body to the indignities of the grave, that discards matter, that loses all that we are wont to regard as substance, and soars away in company only with that which completely eludes our senses, and is utterly unfurnished with such instruments of knowledge and action as we have always found indispensable, will seem to us visionary and unreal. The resurrection, which is to give man back his old materiality, clothes life again with substance and reality. But what is he to do, what is he to be, in the long interstice that stands between it and the present life? "Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" What, where are all they—the loved and lost—that have vanished from our side during the period of our earthly sojourn?—What, where, shall we be, when in a few short years we shall all be added to their company?

Now, to this question, it has been already intimated, no very full and satisfactory answer can be rendered.

Mystery broods over the intermediate state, mystery too deep for man to penetrate. A few hints alone are given, to lessen, if not to appease, our anxiety. The souls of men after death remain conscious, continue still percipient and active; and "the souls of the righteous after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh are in joy and felicity." But how perception and activity are maintained without bodily organs, or in what the joy and felicity of the departed righteous consist, we are not particularly informed. There is a wide sea of conjecture open, but sober minds will be slow to embark upon its bosom. Minute information concerning the intermediate state we cannot have, for God has seen fit to seal it up from our inspection. But meanwhile, some general truths we may gather; and these, if not sufficient to satisfy our desires, may at least serve to allay our anxiety.

And first, then, we seem warranted in regarding the interval between death and the resurrection as a period of repose. It is often called sleep, indeed, perhaps this is its most common representation. There is perhaps no idea that it more commonly suggests than that of tranquillity, the cessation of labour and of disturbance. It is the sleeping time of humanity. Intermediate between the work of life and the waking of the resurrection, it is characterized perhaps more than by anything else as the state of rest and quietude. The business of life is done, and the trial of life is ended; and weary men, emancipated at last from the doom of toil and endurance, rest from their labours and their sufferings, and groan no more under the crushing burden

of life's tasks and pains. Labour has reached its end, and "patience has had its perfect work." "He shall enter into peace," says the prophet, "they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." And this view alone, were there no prospect of positive enjoyment opened to us in the disembodied state, might reconcile us to its approach, nay, cause us to sigh for its arrival. Only assure us that there "the wicked shall cease from troubling and the weary be at rest," that there no harrowing care, no wasting toil shall reach us, that there no longer shall be the necessity of unpleasant exertion, or exposure to the assaults of pain and trouble, and we will welcome the summons that calls us to the land of spirits, and pass to it joyfully, even through the dark and forbidding portal of the grave. Only let us retain consciousness, that we may feel that our task is done, that our warfare is accomplished, that the load is lifted from our shoulder, that no reluctant or painful effort will ever be again put forth, no vexing thoughts arise, no sorrowing regret or mournful foreboding visit us, but, in perfect freedom from all causes of molestation or disturbance, the quiet days that number out our sojourning there flow on, and we shall not lack the means of a very high and exquisite satisfaction.

The repose that awaits us there will be all the more welcome and delightful from contrast with the turmoil and vexation of the life that precedes it. Our whole outward and inward life in the flesh is a task and a trial. Seek to disguise it as we may from ourselves or others, our inward feeling is that "we that are in

this tabernacle do groan being burdened." Without, we are always putting forth endeavours, few of them pleasurable, many painful, to attain that which either eludes our grasp, or ill requites our exertions. Within, are the fever of desire, the bitterness of disappointment, the sense of meanness and imperfection and sin, the painful processes of self-culture, the mortifying sense that we are not what we would be, the uncomfortable feeling of our own impotency, the disheartening conviction that we essay our work with insufficient powers and inadequate successes. But there, we shall feel that our last task is done, our last sigh breathed, our last tear shed, our last pain ended. Life will stretch out in an unbroken expanse of tranquillity, "a sea of glass, clear as crystal," ruffled by no wave, reflecting from its placid bosom the image of a serene and cloudless heaven. And tranquillity, to those who have never known it before, will itself be bliss.

But again, the intermediate state will be a condition of progress. Progress is the law of life, and we cannot reasonably suppose that its operation will be suspended during that long period which is to elapse between death and the resurrection. The intermediate state may, I have thought, be considered as the period of contemplation, in contradistinction from the activity which characterizes the present life. It is, if I may so say, humanity's leisure hour, during which, secluded from the engrossing cares and distracting influences to which it is subjected here, it may give itself up undividedly to meditation and reflection. There, it may review the past, think over its former history, discover

and estimate its faults and errors, retrace the path by which God led it through its earthly pilgrimage, and find its retrospect full of incitements to humility, admiration, gratitude and self-consecration.

Then, too, to the clearer vision of spirit purged from fleshly films and earthly obstructions, will truth unfold itself with increased clearness, certainty and power. "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face. Now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known." The era of indistinctness and uncertainty will have passed away. The mind's view of truth will be direct, intuitive; and as the result, its knowledge and belief, absolute, definite, firm. There will be an end to the question, "What is truth?" No more shall we have occasion to pray, "Lord! I believe, help thou mine unbelief." And it is apparent that this fuller light of truth must be attended with an increased power of impression, and with all those effects on the sentiments and character which naturally result from it. Even here, truth is the instrument, the indispensable instrument, of sanctification. "Sanctify them through thy truth," was the parting prayer of the Saviour for his disciples. Truth, in the disembodied state, in proportion to the greater clearness and fulness of its manifestation to the soul, will have increased opportunity of performing its appropriate, peculiar office. Faith there must be a very different thing from that dim and wavering recognition of things unseen, which is all it ever can be here. Faith there will live on perception, not as now, on testimony. The soul will have direct access to the ob-

jects of faith. All that it embraces will stand out before the mind in living substance and reality. Surely, under such circumstances, the soul will not pass its time idly and unprofitably. In a condition so favourable to it, there will be spiritual growth. Even now, the apostle describes the effect of devout and believing contemplation to be assimilation. By it, says he, we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory." How much more rapidly and effectually shall this be done, when contemplation shall be so much more vivid and affecting?

Far, very far, then, will that pause which will succeed the event of death be from being a useless and barren interval, a mere syncope and blank in our existence, a period of unprofitable indolence and dreamy repose. Oh no. Although it is probable, that during it, we shall be the passive recipients of impressions from without, rather than agents in putting forth a voluntary activity, it will be far from an unproductive and stationary season. There will be flowing in upon the soul continually influences calculated to strengthen and exalt it. It will be heaping up treasures of knowledge and experience. The difficulties that once perplexed it will be solved, contradictions reconciled, mysteries unveiled, gaps in the system of truth filled up, dim glimpses and surmises turned into clear and certain discoveries. The mind and heart will be kept in perpetual employment and play. The religious sentiments and affections will be gradually developed and strengthened; and the soul will be hourly ripening for "the glory that shall be revealed to it at the appearing of Jesus



Christ." Oh then, let us not think that the state of the dead is all dreariness, vacuity and desolation, or, at the best, a negative and barren quietude. There is employment for the disembodied soul at once profitable and delightful, and affording it no mean earnest and foretaste of its heavenly condition.

Once more, the separate state will be a condition of hope. It is a season of waiting, the vestibule only of a more glorious state to which it is introductory. And they who are passing through it feel that they are temporary sojourners, and are "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." But there is nothing in this waiting that is wearisome or tedious. Hope sheds so bright an effulgence over the present, as renders it almost heavenly. They inhabit a land nearer the presence chamber of God than ours, and doubtless enjoy a much clearer vision of its reality and its bliss. As they dwell upon its borders, so they are permitted to look across them into its happy scenes. Its light shines upon them, and its airs reach them loaded with the perfume of its delicious and life-inspiring fruits. The hope of the dead is doubtless a far better thing than the hope of the living, improved by the change of their relation to eternal rewards, as well as by their greater proximity to them. Ours is a state of probation, and our hope can be at the best but a probationer's hope, a hope that always must be mingled with fear, while yet that possibility of losing the prize which attaches to the very idea of probation remains, and the motions of sins within us continually remind us of imperfection and weakness. But the dead that are at rest are sinless. The alloy of corrup-

tion is thoroughly taken away. They are like unto the angels. Their fitness for heaven is perfect, and they only wait the bidding of the Master to enter in. Their eternal state, too, is fixed and irrevocable, and they know it. They have no fear of losing their crown; for though it is not yet placed upon their brow, their title to it is plain, absolute, irreversible. Nothing is wanting but actual investiture. The judgment to them is future only in form and outward array. Its award is virtually past. Even now are they reaping rich antepasts of the felicity it promises. Feeling themselves perfectly meet for heaven, and perfectly sure of it, their hope is unanxious, vivid, full. Such a hope, we, in this dim and distant world, know nothing of, encumbered with the grossness of the flesh, and vexed with the workings of remaining sinfulness. It is a hope that approximates closely to fruition, that is, as it were, always prelude and melting into the happiness it foresees, a hope indeed full of immortality.

It is easy, then, to see how the state of the dead, embracing ease from all molestation, delightful and profitable employment for the mind, with a resulting sense of continual progress in knowledge and holiness, and a vivid and entrancing foresight of richer glories secure and near at hand, contains in it the elements of a great and inconceivable felicity; and how well we may acquiesce in the Apostle's judgment, that "to die is gain."

Thus have I endeavoured to render such answer to the question of the text as with our present limited degree of knowledge we are authorized to give. We cannot tell you what locality the dead inhabit, what

province of the universe is assigned for their abode; nor can we describe to you the forms and functions of purely spiritual and incorporeal life. But we can tell you that they live, and are conscious of life; that they dwell in a world fitted to their nature and their wants; and that in it their condition is one of rest, progress and delightful anticipation, a condition so much above the poor life we are leading in these earthly scenes, that we are subjects of their commiseration, not they of ours, they of our congratulation, not we of theirs.

In all that I have said, you will perceive, that I have spoken of the holy dead, of those who "sleep in Jesus," who during their earthly pilgrimage have walked by faith and served God in their generation. But to the wicked, also, there is an interval between death and resurrection, an intermediate period, a separate state, to them as well as to the righteous a conscious and progressive life; but, alas! of what opposite qualities! for rest, disquiet; for improvement, deterioration; for hope, the "fearful looking-for of judgment;" for earnestness of heaven, the bitter foretastes of eternal death. I dwell not on the theme; I mention it but for caution. Our business this morning is with the more grateful contemplation of the departed righteous.

In view of our subject we find consolation for the bereaved. Our friends are vanishing from our side. They have passed into the invisible world. The places that knew them, know them no more. But they "all live unto Him," into whose more immediate presence and charge they have passed. They are not dead

but sleep. They have entered into no condition of insensate oblivion, or dreary indolence. It is but rest after weary toil and wearing trial, the rest of happy retrospection and joyful hope, wherein the soul, free from the clogs and burdens of the flesh, waits in such bliss as is almost heavenly, the call that shall summon it to a perfect consummation of its joy both in body and soul in heaven itself. Envidable, happy change! Well might the wise man say, "I praised the dead that are already dead, more than the living that are yet alive."

Finally, in this view we find comfort in the prospect of our own approaching departure. Our friends that have passed out of our sight have not gone long before us. The procession of the living to the country of the dead is ever moving onward, and we are moving in it. Why should we fear to cross its borders? It is no land of insensibility or cheerless gloom. There, is rest for the weary, purity and strength for the weak and imperfect, certain and joyful hope for the fearful and faint-hearted. We leave friends but to regain friends lost; we turn away from dim views and faint anticipations to a nearer vision and richer, clearer prelibations of final glory. When there is hardship in gain, in advancement, in nearer approach to the true perfection and highest bliss of humanity, then may the Christian fear death. Wherefore, my beloved, fear not to die, but be "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

THE END.

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